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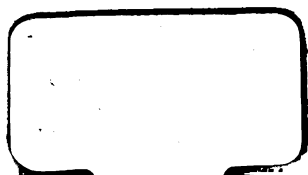
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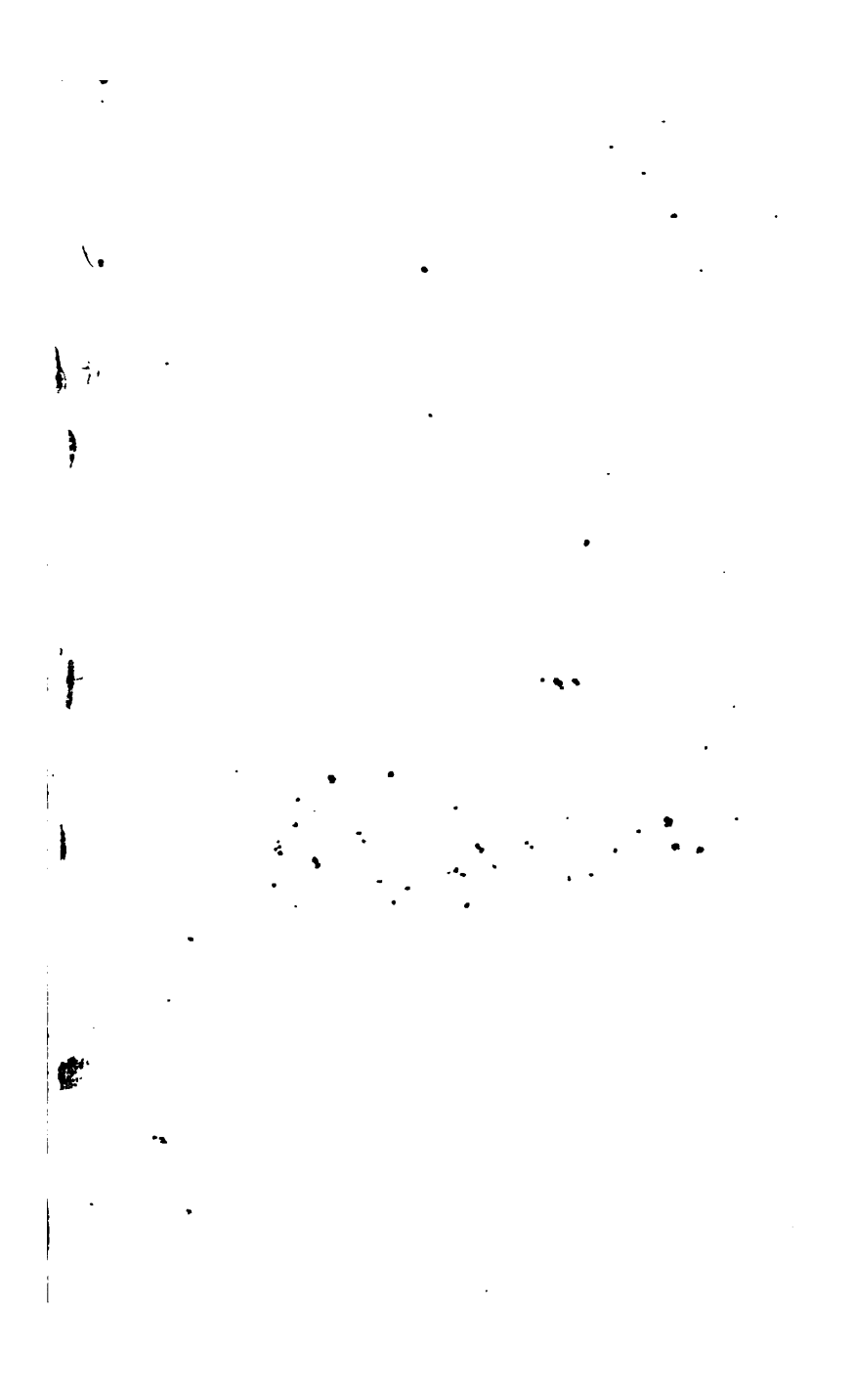
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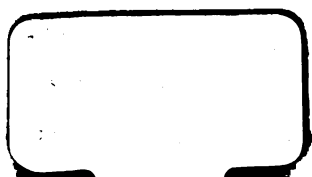
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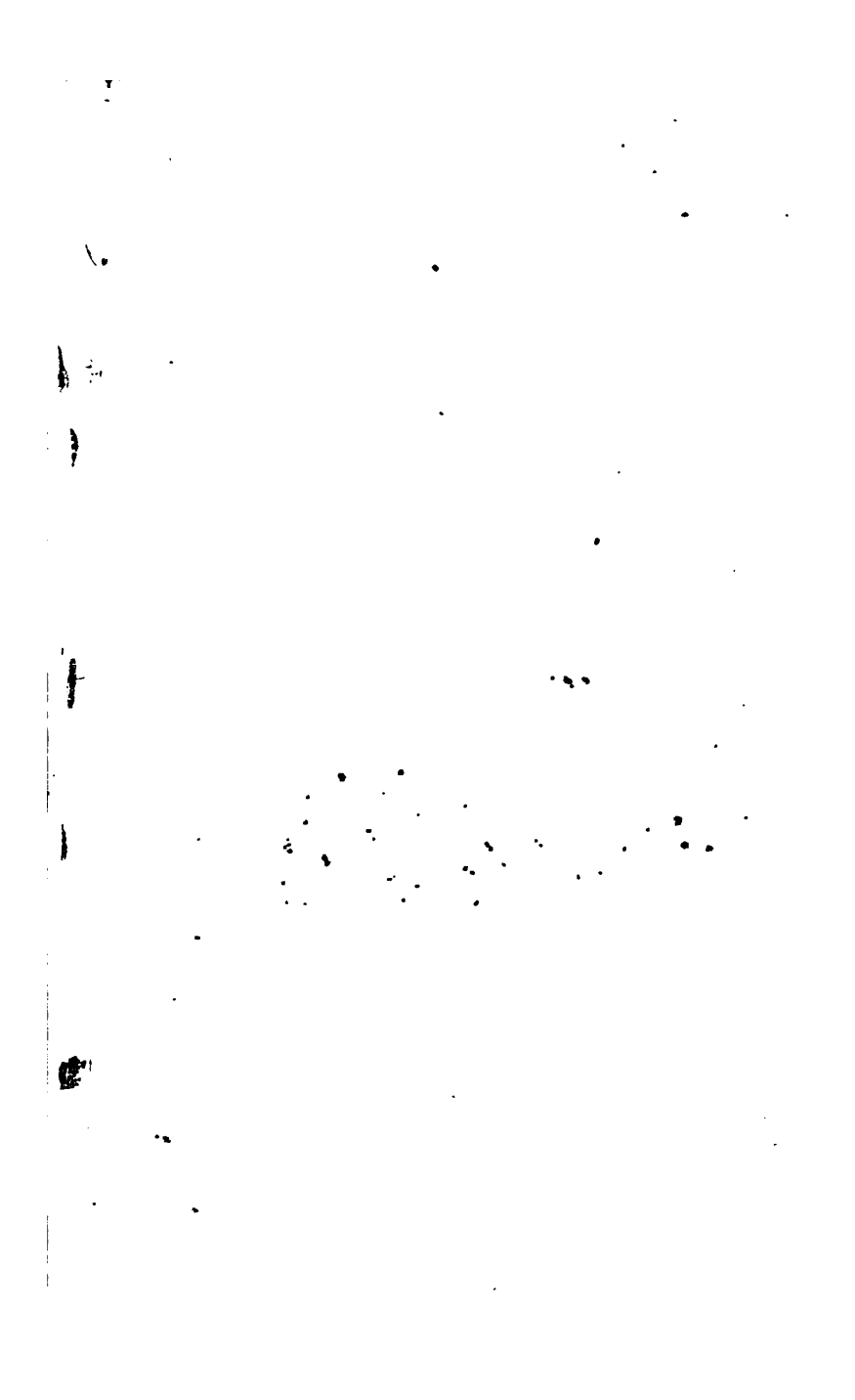
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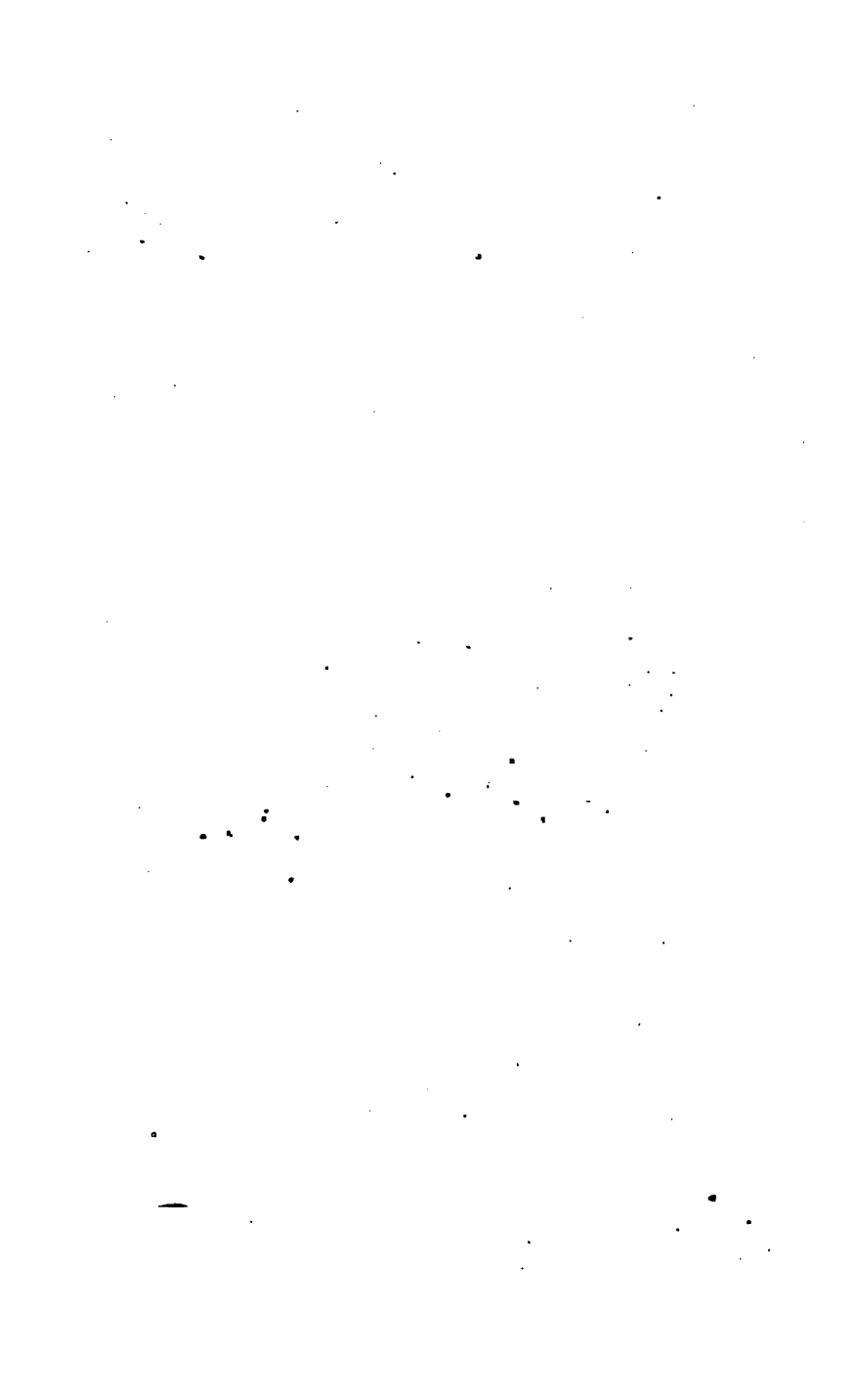












# THE ACTS OF THE DEACONS.

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# THE ACTS OF THE DEACONS:

BEING

**A Course of Lectures,**

CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL,

ON

ACTS VI., VII., VIII., AND XXI. 8—15,

IN TWO BOOKS:

BOOK I.—THE ACTS OF ST. STEPHEN, THE  
PROTOMARTYR

BOOK II.—THE ACTS OF ST. PHILIP, EVANGELIST.

BY

EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S,  
CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF OXFORD,  
AND ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN ORDINARY.

RIVINGTONS,  
London, Oxford, and Cambridge.  
1866.



*100. S. 200.*



TO THE  
VENERABLE CHARLES CARR CLERKE, D.D.

CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, ARCHDEACON OF OXFORD,

WHOSE WISDOM, KINDNESS, AND PIETY,

DURING A LONG CAREER OF USEFULNESS,

HAVE CONCILIATED,

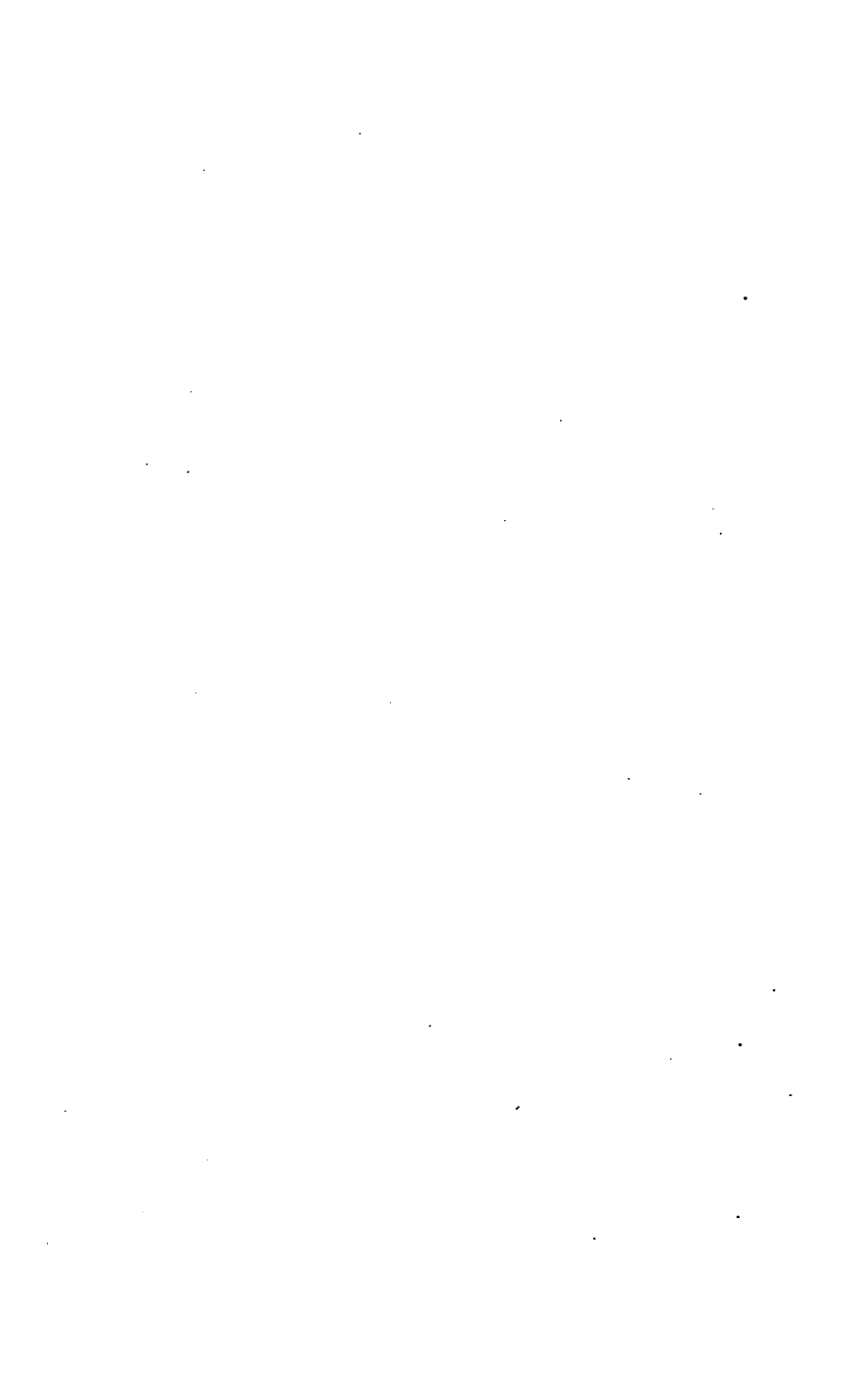
FROM ALL WHO KNOW HIM,

AS MUCH ESTEEM FOR HIS JUDGMENT AS AFFECTION

FOR HIS PERSON,

THESE PAGES ARE, WITH HIS PERMISSION,

INSCRIBED.



## PREFATORY NOTICE.

---

THIS little work is designed as a Critical and Practical Commentary upon that interesting episode of the Acts of the Apostles which records the career of St. Stephen the Protomartyr, and St. Philip the Evangelist, the only two of the Seven Deacons whose memory the Word of God has embalmed.

These Inspired Biographies are examined with a minuteness of detail which, to some readers, may appear tedious and prolix. But it seems to me that, in narrowing the field of investigation, I have gained a greater insight into the general scope of the Acts of the Apostles, and am better prepared for the intelligent study of other parts of it, than if I had gone over more ground cursorily. God's Word, like His Works, reveals new wonders, whether studied

with the microscope, or with the telescope. But perhaps, as in the Works, so in the Word, a greater advance in knowledge may be made with the microscope than with the telescope.

The Lectures, though carefully revised and annotated in preparing them for the press, were originally delivered as Sermons, and I have not cared to alter the hortatory form of the practical reflections, or to erase the (often common-place) lessons suggested by the Sacred Narrative. It seems to me that we are never quite safe in considering Holy Scripture, if we drop, or even give a subordinate place to, that which we are assured is its primary reference, "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness."

I must apologize, however, for the repetition of certain practical reflections, which I observe now for the first time, when it is too late to eliminate any thing from the work.

I am greatly indebted throughout (more no doubt than I am myself aware) to the Greek Testaments of Dean Alford and Archdeacon Wordsworth, to Mr. Humphry's excellent

Commentary, and Bishop Pearson's Lectures on the Acts, to Conybeare and Howson's Life and Epistles of St. Paul, and to several other learned Commentaries, which are well known and usually studied. Having endeavoured to fill my mind with these before writing, it is probable that several remarks, made under the impression that they were my own, are really due to one or other of the above sources. I have also gained help from Dr. Vaughan's interesting Sermons on "the Early Church." The practical reflections which occur at page 272, on the powerlessness of money to confer happiness, are *consciously* borrowed from that work; while for the discernment of a threefold purpose in St. Stephen's Apology I am *consciously* indebted to Dean Alford.

In writing, it has frequently been suggested to me that the greatest interest would attach to a really learned and devout work on the Acts, which should treat it throughout under this aspect,—“The germs of all Church History found in the Acts of the Apostles.” If there is no existing work occupying exactly this

ground, such a task would be worthy of all the ability, learning, and piety which could be brought to bear upon it. What a chapter might be written by a man versed in Ecclesiastical History, on "The Acts, as exhibiting the great tendencies of Religious Thought in all ages."

If the present work, however defective, tends to excite in plain readers a deeper interest in this most interesting part of the Word of God, and to open up a glimpse or two of its inexhaustible treasures, the writer's object will have been answered.

E. M. G.

AYNHOE RECTORY, BANBURY,

*August 11, 1866.*

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*"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed,*

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*they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."*—  
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give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem."

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*"But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and*

*multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction*

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*of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years."*—ACTS vii. 17—37.

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*most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool : what house will ye build me ? saith the Lord : or what is the place of my rest ? Hath not my hand made all these things ? Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One ; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers : who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.”—ACTS vii. 37—55.*

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## CHAPTER IX.

## THE FIRST MARTYRDOM.

*"Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."*  
—ACTS vii. 57—60.

*"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles."*—ACTS viii. 1.

The execution of St. Stephen, an irregular and tumultuary proceeding connived at by the Roman Government—points of form observed in it—"without the gate"—witnesses—casting the first stone—the necessity for giving in charge the witnesses' clothes—particulars of a Jewish execution by stoning—St. Stephen in his last moments "looking unto Jesus," and doing all things in imitation of Him—St. Stephen's commendation of his spirit to Christ, framed on the model of Christ's commendation of His spirit to the Father—significance of his variations from the model—Stephen's commendation in the form of a prayer—how his sense of sinfulness comes out in it—the Master laid down His life of Himself; from the servant life was taken—Stephen's commendatory Prayer involves an acknowledgment of Christ's Mediatorship—the bodily homage done by St. Stephen to Christ—the death-cry of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada pleaded for vengeance;

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE MARTYR’S FUNERAL.

*“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”—ACTS viii. 2.*

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## BOOK II.

## CHAPTER I.

OF THE ADVENT OF THE GOSPEL TO SAMARIA,  
AND OF THE APPEARANCE OF ST. PHILIP, ONE  
OF THE SEVEN, IN A NEW CHARACTER.

*“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the Apostles. . . . Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.”—ACTS viii. 1, 4, 5.*

The commission given to the Twelve in Our Lord's lifetime restricted them to the country of the Jews—this restriction rescinded by the wider one given after the Ascension—plan of the Acts of the Apostles sketched out in this later commission—residence of the Apostles at Jerusalem for some years after the Ascension—how they interpreted their Master's parting charge to them—a Deacon first carried the Gospel to Samaria, and the Apostle “born out of due time” to “the uttermost parts of the earth”—St. Philip the forerunner of St. Paul in his work, as St. Stephen had been in his preaching—conjecture as to the motives which may have induced him to go down to Samaria—the orderliness of the march of the Gospel—the Samaritans, as Judaized Gentiles, acted as a bridge between the Jewish and Gentile mind—who they were—fortunes of the

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## CHAPTER II.

### OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GENUINE AND SPURIOUS MIRACLES.

*"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame,*

*were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."*  
—ACTS viii. 5—13.

Undesigned coincidences of Holy Scripture—how we gather from St. John's Gospel the simple-minded unprejudiced character of the Samaritans, together with their imperfect state of moral development—among such people sorcery and magic make way—general susceptibility to magical arts about the time of the appearance of the Gospel—causes of this—demoniacal possession contemporaneous with the appearance of Christ and His Apostles—Apollonius of Tyana, and his parodies of Christ's miracles—parallel between Moses confronted with Jannes and Jambres, and Philip confronted with Simon Magus—the legends of Simon Magus—agreement of notices of him in the Fathers with the Scriptural notice—Simon's probable view of Baptism, with his motive for seeking it—wonderment the great effect produced on him by St. Philip's miracles—twofold seal, which distinguished the miracles of St. Philip from those of the sorcerer: 1. The seal of God's glory—Simon's self-glorification—why Philip's miracles occasioned joy: 2. The seal of love to man—Philip's miracles beneficent—explanation of certain miracles of judgment in the Old Testament—miracles are for the sake of some new doctrine or message which they authenticate—reject miracles when not advanced for this object—instances in which the sign corresponds with the doctrine which it is

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Note from Irenæus to the same effect . . . . .	242

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE APOSTLES' VISIT TO SAMARIA.

*“Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.”—ACTS viii. 14—24.*

St. Philip, on the appearance of the Apostles in Samaria, falls into the background—pure disinterestedness of the early missionaries—reasons for St. Peter's forming part of the deputation—St. John's formerly expressed wish to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans—the Scriptural ground for the rite of Confirmation—objection considered, that in the case before us miraculous gifts followed on the imposition of hands—sameness of outward sign in Confirmation and Ordination—reasons for not believing Confirmation to be a Sacrament *generally necessary to salvation*—motives of the offer of money made by Simon Magus to St. Peter—his desire, not the Holy Spirit, but the power of communicating it—and the power of communicating not grace, but gifts—total absence of spirituality in him—the terms of uncertainty in which St. Peter speaks of the acceptance of his prayer, due possibly to Our Lord's words about the sin against the Holy Ghost—contrast of character between Simon the Apostle and Simon the sorcerer—Simon Magus in his rejoinder shows no disposition to pray for himself, and no higher desire than to escape sin's *punishment*—his sin may be repeated in modern times by bringing secular motives into sacred things—by practically asserting the omnipotence of money—by offering human merit in return for God's highest gift, Justification . 254—2

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ST. PHILIP'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE ETHIOPIAN.

*“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jeru-*

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*salem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him.*"—ACTS viii. 26—30.

Possible reason for the explicitness of the directions, which brought about the meeting between St. Philip and the Ethiopian—direction from without—intimation from within—analogous directions given to St. Peter, in the case of Cornelius—St. Philip's mission to the Ethiopian a prelude of St. Peter's to Cornelius—religious position of the Ethiopian—his social position, country, queen, &c.—his occupation, when St. Philip met him—first instance of a private ministration of the Gospel—contrast with St. Philip's ministry in Samaria—reference of St. Paul to his own private ministrations—defective pastoral visitation, a cause of the inefficiency of modern preaching—the Samaritan populace contrasted with the Ethiopian courtier—instances of men of station and wealth, who were also men of piety—Analogy between the fortunes of Daniel and the Ethiopian—the hindrance to God's service lies in the will, not in the position—importance of a convert so influential as the Ethiopian—"Behold, he readeth the Scriptures," a hopeful symptom . . . . . 276—294

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*"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."*—ACTS viii. 30, 31.

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SCRIPTURE.

“*And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*”—ACTS viii. 30, 31.

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Interpretation of Scripture one of the functions of the Church—our Church fulfils this function by means of the Prayer Book—hypothesis of a simple man, perplexed by the differences among Christians, in search of an authoritative exposition of Scripture, such as can satisfy his own reason and conscience—Ministerial Absolution the first subject which meets us on the threshold of the Prayer Book—"what saith the Church" on this subject?—foundation of the Church doctrine to be looked for in the "Form and Manner of Ordering Priests"—Our Lord's words to the Eleven, "Whose soever sins ye remit," &c., &c., addressed to each recipient of priesthood separately—but what do they mean?—when compared with the form of Absolution in the Daily Service, "to forgive" must mean "to declare forgiven on terms sanctioned by Holy Scripture"—in "the Order of the Administration of the Holy Communion," absolution is ministered in the form of an authoritative prayer for pardon—the prayer of faith <i>effective</i> —why the Absolution of the Sick should be worded more strongly than those in the Daily and Communion Offices—this form combines the authoritative prayer with the authoritative declaration—conditions on which alone this form of Absolution may be ministered—significance of these conditions—difference between "absolving" and "forgiving"—reference to Absolution in the exhortation to be given previously to the administration of the Holy Communion—brief summary of the Prayer Book doctrine, in four particulars—"Saith not the Law the same also?"—the fundamental passage in John xx.—reasons for believing that the power then conferred did not die with the Apostles—the Apostles exercised this power by setting forth repentance and faith as the conditions of the pardon of sins—St. Paul's intercession for his congregations in his Epistles—St. James's directions for the visitation of the sick, and his assurance of the sick being pardoned on the intercession of "the Elders"—we retain all of this injunction which has reference to the <i>spiritual</i> disease—St. Paul's absolution and restoration of a great offender to Church fellowship—apply to other moot points of controversy the method of settling the question here illustrated—how to meet the objection that the Prayer Book is not the offspring of a single mind . . . . .	313—335
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## CHAPTER VII.

## THE CONVERSION AND BAPTISM OF THE EUNUCH.

*“ And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? . . . And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”—ACTS viii. 31—36. 38.*

Circuitousness of the method by which the Eunuch's conversion was brought about—significance of his receiving in the wilderness the call of the Gospel—we may find God where we least expect to meet Him—distinction between the laws of Nature and of Grace—the effect in Nature never wrought without the instrumentality—the means employed in Brother Lawrence's conversion—probable reason for the Eunuch's choice of the Prophetical section on which he was engaged—explanation of the latter part of the passage—the Articles of the Creed, of which St. Philip's text must have led him to speak—whence the Ethiopian's knowledge of Baptism was derived—traditional notices of the scene of the Eunuch's baptism—usual procedure of Divine Grace, as laid down in the Scriptures, observed in this instance—Christ's definition

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of the congregation to which His Presence is attached—such a congregation found in the Eunuch's chariot—immaturity of the Eunuch's knowledge of the Gospel—same feature observable in the gaoler of Philippi—Baptism is matriculation, not graduation, in the school of Christ—the teaching previous to Baptism distinguished in Our Lord's Commission from the teaching subsequent to it—spiritual receptivity, rather than amount of knowledge, the great qualification for this sacrament—the special efficacy upon the heart of the doctrine of the Passion—Lord Rochester—Kajarnak—the great subject of St. Paul's preaching . . . . .	336—360
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Note (from Bishop Pearson's "Lectures on the Acts") on the scene of the Eunuch's Baptism . . . . .	347, 348
Note on Hans Egede, and his principle of administering a mission, with a quotation from his Description of Greenland . . . . .	357, 358

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF THE RAPTURE OF ST. PHILIP AND OF THE EUNUCH.

*"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and [in the original for] he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea."*—ACTS viii. 39, 40.

The conversion of the Eunuch an epoch in the Church's history—his transport of joy—St. Philip's transport to another region—Scriptural instances of bodily transport—the legend of St. Augustine's Baptism by St. Ambrose—possible opera-

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tion of the Spirit on the human body—the body capable of sanctification, and the subject of resurrection—popular theology on the subject of the body, different from that of the Holy Scriptures—method of consecrating the body—vanishing of St. Philip, when he had put the Eunuch in possession of Christ, teaches us that we should not “preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord”—possibility of obtruding the office of the minister, even where his person is not put forward—the ministerial office instrumental—means not to be erected into ends—meaning of the particle “for” in “for he went on his way rejoicing”—the Eunuch had no time to form an attachment to St. Philip—God gives us in his case an instance of <i>pure</i> spiritual joy in Christ's salvation—The probable subsequent reflections of the Ethiopian on his interview with St. Philip—joy, a criterion of our receiving the Gospel in simplicity—distinction between happiness and joy—holy joy a source of moral strength—St. Philip prepares the way for the Apostles along the coast line of Palestine—complete change in the scene of the Evangelist's labours—no subsequent success recorded as attending on his ministry—periods of spiritual refreshment alternate with hard work—this life not our rest	361—362

Note on the origin of the hymn *Te Deum*, from Bingham's “Antiquities,” and Mr. Blunt's “Annotated Book of Common Prayer” . . . . . 364, 365

Note, from Dr. Bushnell's “New Life,” on the distinction between happiness and joy . . . . . 376, 377

Note, from Smith's “Dictionary of the Bible,” on the five cities of the Philistines . . . . . 378, 379

## CHAPTER IX.

### ST. PAUL IN ST. PHILIP'S FAMILY.

*“And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cæsarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the*

*same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."*—ACTS xxi. 8—14.

Cæsarea described—its importance as a sphere of missionary operations—why St. Philip took no part in the admission of Cornelius to the Church—the Apostolate honoured by God, as His own Ordinance—a new head made for the Apostolate by the call of St. Paul—yet Gentile Christianity, in the person of Cornelius, must receive the formal sanction of the *original* Apostolate—exclusiveness, and undervaluation of God's Ordinances, alike discouraged by Holy Scripture—cultivate wideness of sympathies with strict adherence to Church principles—St. Philip's career merges into that of St. Paul—St. Luke probably obtained, under St. Philip's roof, the account of the conversion of the Eunuch—St. Philip, a colleague of St. Stephen's, side by side with St. Paul, who had "consented unto his death"—St. Philip's daughters endowed with the gift of prophecy—appearance of the fourfold ministry, referred to in the Epistle to the Ephesians, under St. Philip's roof—the appearance of Agabus in St. Philip's domestic circle—his symbolic prophecy—its *substantial* fulfilment, with the minute divergences of the fact from the prediction—Symbolism—the Sacraments sanction the principle of it—it rests ultimately upon the Incarnation—may be, however, carried to mischievous lengths—its reasonable limits traced in the "Discourse of Ceremonies"—probable specious argument of St. Paul's com-

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panions, to induce him to change his course—why St. Paul did not yield to their solicitations—his susceptibility to affection—but his original purpose had been formed “in the Spirit”—Scriptural proof of this—his imitation of the Lord in overruling counsel to spare himself—in matters of duty, a man must be guided by the light of his own conscience—scanty records of the Deacons, as of the Apostles—conjecture that Nicolas may have been among the Seven what Judas was among the Twelve—combined brevity and significance of Holy Scripture . . . . .	333—408
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# BOOK I.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHURCH ORGANIZING HERSELF.

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

“And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”—ACTS vi. 1—7.

THE Four Gospels tell us the story of the personal Christ. The Book of the Acts of the

Apostles tells us what is scarcely less interesting—the story of the mystical Christ ; or, in other words, of the Church. The Gospels are accounts of the Head. The Acts are an account of the Body.

Like every other part of the Word of God, this holy book is a seed. In the whole history of the Church of Christ, there is nothing which is not here represented in germ and embryo. We see here the tares of heresy and sin shooting up vigorously side by side with the good seed of God's Word. We are apt to think that Rationalists and Ritualists are the growth of modern times ; but the opinions of both Rationalists and Ritualists are found in principle in the earliest origin of Church history. The Rationalist's habits of thought—his repudiation of the miraculous, his irrepressible tendency to pare away, as so much useless rind, every thing in revelation which he considers superfluous, and to reduce the oracles of God to the narrowest possible compass—these are all to be found in the Sadducee ; Rationalism is only Sadduceism in a modern dress. And the Ritualist's habits of thought—his undue partiality for outward observances, his tendency to narrow, not the borders of Revelation, but the borders of the

Church, by insisting upon non-essentials as if they were essential—these features are found, though of course in a different form, in the Pharisaical or Judaizing party of the Apostolic Church, which exerted such a powerful influence over the early Christian Communities. Then, again, as to outward institutions, we have in this book the origin of different orders of ministers, of Church councils, and of Christian missions. The shape in which these things afterwards unfolded themselves in the experience of the Church was no doubt new ; but the germs of all of them are found in the Acts, which indeed is, in embryo, a complete Church history.

In the present course of Lectures, I propose to consider that episode of the Acts of the Apostles which may be called the Acts of the Deacons—or, in other words, the stories of St. Stephen and St. Philip. We will say a word first on the vital connexion of this beautiful episode with the main argument of the book.

When Christianity was born into the world, it was wrapped in Jewish swaddling-clothes. These swaddling clothes were bound tightly round it, and impeded its free action. All the Apostles were Jews ; and that Apostle who, in the counsels of God's Providence, was to be the

leader of the Christian movement, Peter, was strongly under the influence of Jewish prejudices. Even after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him at Pentecost, it asked a vision and a voice from heaven, and an intimation from the Holy Spirit, and an extraordinary coincidence, to induce St. Peter to hold social intercourse with men of another nation. And when he was compelled to admit the propriety of such intercourse, we still find him, with that moral weakness which had been so painfully exhibited in his denial of Christ, struggling against his own deliberate convictions. "When certain persons were come from James," St. Paul tells us (certain members, that is, of the Judaizing party), St. Peter "withdrew and separated himself" from Gentile society in Antioch, "fearing them which were of the circumcision." It was clear that if the leadership of the Church were to be exclusively committed to St. Peter, the new Society would never become what its Founder intended it to be, Catholic; but would retain to the end its original character of a Jewish sect. Therefore, as God works by human agents, human agents must be found or prepared, who might unwind the swaddling-clothes of Jewish prejudice, and be instrumental

in giving the Church a freer action. Such men were ready to hand. There was a large body of Jews, termed Hellenists, or Grecians, who had come under the influence, and had deeply imbibed the spirit, of Greek civilization. They spoke Greek, and read the Old Testament in the Greek translation of it, called the Septuagint not in the original Hebrew. But their language was only an outward symptom of the habits of thought and the manners which they had adopted. While they were Jews in religion (some of them born so<sup>1</sup>, others proselytes—converts from heathenism), they had an acquaintance with Gentile life and Gentile lite-

<sup>1</sup> It seems probable that the word Hellenist (rendered *Grecians* in our translation, as distinct from *Greek*: see Acts vi. 1; ix. 29; xi. 20) denotes, not extraction, but a certain set of habits and associations. Thus, a Judaized Gentile (a heathen who had been proselytized by the Jews, like the centurion of Capernaum), and a Gentilized Jew (one who, by settling in foreign countries, had adopted the Greek civilization and dialect, like the many foreigners who came up to the Feast of Pentecost, in Acts ii.), are both embraced under the name Hellenist. The Hellenists, even when of Gentile birth, were not necessarily Greeks. The word need not imply more than that they took up with the prevalent form of civilization (which, even under the Roman Empire, was Greek), and used the Greek language, which had a general currency in the great centres of commerce. See Mr. Westcott's able article "Hellenist" in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.

rature, which gave them more expanded views than the Aramaic-speaking Jews, who had never lived out of Palestine. These men acted as a bridge of communication between the Jewish and the Gentile mind, being Jews in their acknowledgment of Jehovah, and Gentiles in habits of thought; and they were the great instruments in the hands of God's Providence for unsectarianizing the infant Church, and giving it a Catholic character. Now the point of the Acts of the Apostles at which I take up the history, is just where this agency is brought upon the stage. The names of the seven Deacons are all Greek names; and it may hence be inferred that all of them were Hellenists. It was very judicious to choose such persons for the office; for the object was to extinguish a complaint of the Hellenists against the Hebrews. The complaint would be most easily extinguished by setting those to remedy the alleged wrong who, being Hellenists themselves, might be supposed to act in the interests of the injured party.—It is the part sustained by one of these Hellenists which leads to the introduction of St. Paul upon the stage of the history. At St. Stephen's martyrdom Saul of Tarsus was present and assisted. And the prayer of St.

Stephen for his murderers, seconding the moral effect of the spectacle of his demeanour, won for the Church the conversion and the great ministry of St. Paul. Now St. Paul, we know, was God's great instrument in the conversion of the Gentiles; it was St. Paul, far more than any other single man, who unwound the swaddling-clothes of the Church's infancy, and gave her free course and unimpeded action among all the nations of the earth. And St. Stephen's prayers and example were instruments in St. Paul's conversion. And St. Stephen was an Hellenist; appointed officially to the guardianship of Hellenist interests.

We see, then, the exact point at which we take up the history. It is when the Christian Church, which is yet a bud upon the old Jewish stem, is bursting with new life, opening, for the first time, to receive into her bosom the Gentiles, as fellow-citizens with the saints, and members, no less than the Jew, of the household of God.

This bursting of the bud took place after the following manner. A community of goods prevailed in the Church at Jerusalem. Those Christians who possessed property, animated, in

the first fervours of their conversion, by a glorious contempt of this world's wealth, and drawn together in bonds of sympathy with all those who professed the same hope as themselves, sold their lands and houses, and threw the proceeds into a common fund, which was administered to the poor by daily instalments. As the new converts increased, this daily distribution soon outgrew the control of the Apostles. To see to it properly, would have taken up their whole time. Complaints of unfairness arose ; it was said that the claims of the widows of the Hellenists to maintenance out of the common fund were ignored. The Apostles immediately take steps to remove the ground of complaint. Their charge was too onerous for them ; and a portion of it must be delegated to other hands. Moses had found it necessary to petition for duly qualified persons to bear with him the burden of a murmuring people ; and the Divine Master of the Apostles had on one occasion refused to appear in the character of a judge as to worldly property, and a divider of temporalities. It is probable that both of these examples suggested to the Apostles the step to be taken on the present occasion. They propose to the whole body of Christians to appoint seven officers, who

might be deputed to administer the Church Fund, and to give to every member of God's household his portion of bodily food in due season. As for themselves, they would dispense only the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, and minister only to spiritual necessities. The disciples *chose* these officers; the Apostles, in whose office was wrapped up the entire administration of the Church, *appointed* them by laying on of hands. The result justified completely the wisdom of the arrangement. The seven Hellenist almoners soon set right the little partialities complained of. Well organized internally, the Church carried on with vigour the work of proselytism. By the order and energy of its administration (the marks of an inherent vitality), its bitterest enemies were struck with admiration, and a large multitude of the Jewish priests became obedient to the faith.

But more than this. The new Institution gave the first impulse to great spirits, who rose high above their position. The Lord had said that the last should be first; and Stephen, one of the new Deacons, though officially in a subordinate position, outstripped Apostles in the fervour of his zeal and love, and snatched before any one of them the palm of martyrdom.

The great point in this narrative which gives room for practical observations, is that the organization of the Church took its shape from circumstances as they arose. This might conceivably have been otherwise. During the forty days which elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, our Blessed Lord spake to His Apostles, we are told, of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He might, if it had so pleased Him, in that space of time have prescribed the exact form which the constitution of His Church should take, have warned the Apostles, for example, that they would require help in the lower department of their functions, and have indicated the steps they should take to secure such help. Previous prescription, guided by His divine foresight of the Church's future, might have settled all things for her beforehand. But far other than this was to be the line which her course should take. She was endowed at Pentecost with the indwelling Spirit of her Master, a Spirit which made His Divine Presence with her not a mere memory of the past, but a reality of the present. For what purpose was this indwelling Spirit granted, but to enable her to legislate for herself as emergencies arose? So far from crystallizing, at the outset

of her course, the Church, having the life of her risen and ascended Head within her, was to grow; and it is the law of growth that the thing which grows, shapes itself by influences from the world without. The Church, then, as a growing thing, must necessarily shape its course with the exigencies of the time, and must make provision for emergencies as they arise.

Now every branch of the Church, if really living, should be free to show its vitality in this way. Our own branch of it should be thus free; and we trust in God that it is making progress towards the assertion of such freedom. In every true Church there should be a legislative ecclesiastical authority, properly representing the spiritual headship of Christ, whose province should be to decide questionable points of doctrine, to regulate ceremonies, to censure and suppress heresies, and to adapt both the ritual and organization of the Church to the ever-new wants of the age. Such an authority in design and intention, though by no means as yet in power, is the Convocation of the English Church; and as we firmly believe in the vitality of our branch of the Church, we do heartily wish success to the revival of its delibe-

rative and legislative Council. How far this council may require a reconstitution before it can represent the Church at all fairly, and carry weight with all members of it, and again what shape this reconstitution should take, it does not lie within the line of our present argument to inquire. Our point is this, that every Church framed upon the Apostolic model must be a living power, and must speak, not in old formularies interpreted by legal acumen, but in living accents. To say that the voice of our Church is to be heard only in the Thirty-nine Articles and Book of Common Prayer, and that these venerable documents are to be applied to present cases, not by the learning of theologians, but by the ingenuity of special pleaders, may seem to some a satisfactory end of controversy; but when narrowly considered, it really amounts to saying that our Church has no present vitality in it; that her Divine Master is no longer with her and in her, and that in His absence, all her powers of self-control, self-guidance, self-legislation are hopelessly cut off. That is indeed a very modest view of the position of the Church of England; but then it is an utterly desponding view, indeed a view which unchurches her altogether, virtually declares her to be no part of the

Christian Society, and reduces us all (as many well-meaning people are anxious to do) to a set of individuals professing faith in Christ. But if our Blessed Lord founded a Society as well as taught a Religion, and promised to be with the rulers of it even to the end of the world, we are hardly at liberty to accept the Religion while we ignore the Society. And practically we do ignore the Society, or, which is the same thing, ignore its present existence, if we restrict the guidance of the modern Church to formularies whose framers could not possibly have foreseen our present difficulties, and virtually refuse to acknowledge any living legislation. So long as we do this, other Christian Communities, all of which at all events pretend to such legislation, will have the advantage over us in the estimation of those who form their views upon the Word of God. In the Acts, we find the early Church dealing with difficulties as they arise, settling controversies, punishing offenders, issuing decrees for the converts to keep. The Romanist can say, "I show you the power to do all this in the modern Church; it is vested in the Pope as the successor of St. Peter." And the Presbyterian can say, "I show you in the General Assembly an authority competent to

define doctrine and to enforce discipline." If the Church of England can only say, "I show you no such thing as a living judge of heresy and a living administrator of discipline; I do not pretend to such powers; I laid down my laws for all possible emergencies three hundred years ago, and as for the application of them, the jurists of the law of England, for whom I have no guarantee that they have even read the Bible, must look to that;" it will be alleged, and not without grounds, that either the Church of Rome or the Church of Calvin resemble more nearly than our own the Church of the Acts of the Apostles.

But here an objection to this effect may arise in the minds of some: "Of course the Church of the Acts of the Apostles *has* passed away for ever. It is no model at all; for its circumstances were wholly different from ours. The Apostles were inspired men; and, as inspired men, their guidance might safely be trusted. But in the guidance of uninspired men no trust can be reposed. They will be always liable to err even in matters of the gravest moment. Restrain them as much as possible from independent judgment, tie up legislation as much as possible in old formularies, and let these be interpreted

in the narrowness of the letter. These, if in the main sound and good, will be the safest guides. The Acts of the Apostles is a narrative most edifying to us as private Christians ; but as for finding in it any hints for the government of the modern Church, or the direction of modern ecclesiastical movements, the utter difference of times, and circumstances, and state of society, precludes our doing that." A sad error, indeed, and a woful confusion of thought, but one which has struck its roots deep into many minds. In *their character of writers of holy Scripture*, the Apostles were no doubt inspired, as no other than Scriptural writers ever were. But *as rulers of the Church*, it does not appear that the Apostles had any promises of guidance which did not reach to their legitimate successors. In commissioning them to preach, baptize, and teach (functions which surely are inherited by the modern Ministry), our Lord specially contemplated their death, but assured them at the same time that it should not break off His promise to them. "Lo," said He, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." As much as to say, "My presence shall cling to your successors in the Ministry, even when you yourselves are no more." And immediately after

speaking about the Church, and committing to it its powers of binding and loosing, He gives to its solemn assemblies this sanction; "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, **THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM,**"—words surely not applicable to the Apostolic Church alone.

Nor did the Apostles ever act in the administration of the Church as if they were autocrats and infallible oracles, which, if they had been acting by an inspiration peculiar to themselves, they would have done. In the passage before us, they confer with the multitude of the disciples, reason with them upon the rights of the case, leave to them the selection of the seven deacons, and do not act at all in the matter, until it was clear that they carried with them popular feeling—"and the saying pleased the whole multitude." As for the moral and spiritual perfection which some persons conceive to have attached to the early Church, it is a mere fancy opposed to all the facts. Perhaps we should not be mistaken in saying that, in proportion to the vigour with which the word of the Gospel shot up at that time in the soil of the human heart, was the rankness and the abundance of the tares which shot up side by

side with it. If there was a Simon Peter to communicate the gifts of the Holy Ghost, there was a Simon Magus, who proposed to purchase with money the power to dispense these gifts. If there was a Paul to preach the Gospel in high places, there was an Elymas the sorcerer to withstand him. If there was a liberal-hearted and liberal-handed Barnabas, who sold all his property, and devoted the proceeds to the maintenance of the poor, there was an Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the price, while they endeavoured to snatch the credit of giving away the whole. If there were some who earnestly contended for the faith, once delivered, there were other professing Christians who denied its fundamental articles, some saying that there was no resurrection, others that the resurrection was past already. But the passage before us is very observable in this connexion. The Apostles themselves are virtually found fault with for an unfair distribution of moneys entrusted to them. It is said that this distribution is made in the interests of a class. The Apostles themselves do not deny—nay, rather they imply—that there has been some ground for the complaint. The matter ought to be looked into, they say; but their spiritual occu-

pation is so engrossing as to leave them no leisure to look into it properly. But the complaint and its remedy clearly show that neither human nature nor the circumstances of men were very different in those days from what they are now. The chief difference between the Church of primitive times and the modern Church, is not an absence of evil from the one while it is present in the other, but feebler forces, both of good and evil, in later as contrasted with earlier days. Faith and love were then fresh, and operated with the vigour of youth. Miraculous gifts acted as strong impulses to send the Church forward upon her career of victory. But against these good influences both Infidelity and Immorality put on a bolder front than they have since done. Still, however, the Church of the Apostles is on the earth, and the life of her Glorified Head is still whole in her; and that life is fully adequate to inform and guide the body in all the crises which new times and new phases of opinion may bring on.

Finally, we have here an instance of what has often been witnessed—how wise Institutions develope and bring out great characters. St. Stephen and St. Philip had not acquired cele-

brity in Church history before ; perhaps never would have acquired it, had it not been that the new office entrusted to them called forth all their energies. Now here there is a great lesson of wisdom. We believe that there are many persons warmly interested in the Christian cause who might do something (perhaps might do great things) in the service of the Church, if their energies had some regular and natural channel to flow in. There is many a man whose powers are wasted for want of a position. Give him a sphere, and he will become a valuable help-mate ; deny him a sphere, and the motive power that is in him is thrown away. It is for this reason that we rejoice to see, at this critical period of our Church's history, numerous agencies springing up to supplement the lack of service in the regular Ministry of God's Word. We need not assert that all these agencies are in all respects what might be desired. Some of them may have a flaw in their fundamental principles ; others, though sound in theory, may be found on trial to work ill. Still, in all attempted developments of the organization of the Church, we look hopefully to the result. The office of the seven deacons was a bright conception ; it was an experiment which

succeeded nobly, and brought forth glorious fruit. And we know not why the modern Church, in determining to do her Master's work faithfully, and in dependence upon His Spirit, should not act upon the same principle, and make trial of new agencies, and what might even be called new forms of ministry, to meet the demands of new times. Providence does not stand still; opinion moves restlessly onward; why should not the Church of Christ adapt herself with the suppleness and elasticity of life to the onward march of mind and events? In doing so, she may possibly develope great powers, which are now lying hid in her bosom; and, called forth by the exigencies of a new position, a Stephen and a Philip may come upon the stage to play a brilliant part in the service of our Heavenly Master.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LAST FIRST.

"~~The~~ last shall be first."—MATT. xix. 30.

It is hard to flesh and blood to bear, when those who have hitherto held a foremost place are outstripped by some unexpected rival. And if the foremost place be a place, not in the world's esteem, but in God's—if a man have been eminently useful in his generation, and has won many souls, it must still be a struggle to see himself superseded, and to hear of spiritual successes and triumphs which eclipse his own.

For alas! few (if any) of the labourers in the Lord's vineyard work from the *pure* love of Him, intending nothing but His glory and the good of souls. If it were so, the success of God's cause would give us equal pleasure, whether we or other men were the instruments of it. But as it is, if you removed from us the stimulus of human applause and the sympathy of the good, a great deal of our

activity would, I greatly fear, collapse. For the lamentable truth is, that, if we are serving God a little in our work, we are serving ourselves not a little also ; and if we are caring to a certain extent for the interests of His kingdom, we are also providing ourselves a little niche in the esteem and reverence of our circle, from which we should feel it a grievance if a successful rival came to dislodge us.

John the Baptist, a high-souled saint, rose superior (by God's grace) to all personal considerations in his work. When he learned that his influence was decidedly on the wane, and that the people were being drawn off from attendance on his ministry by the superior attractions of Him who spake as never man spake, John was glad instead of grieved ; for he felt that his mission had its legitimate effect, when it sent people to the Lamb of God. Christ, not John, was the Bridegroom of souls ; John was but the friend of the Bridegroom ; and the friend of the Bridegroom which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice.

We cannot doubt that the holy Apostles, who, great as John was, occupied a higher position in the Kingdom of Heaven than he,

had a similar generous enthusiasm in their Master's cause, and were equally disinterested in their advocacy of it. But if we will put ourselves in their position, we shall see that their principle in this respect must have been sorely tried. The Lord had foretold to them, in the words of the text, what they would have to undergo; yet it may be doubted whether they were quite prepared for the astonishing shape which it would take, when it came upon them. St. Peter had asked what their recompense should be for having forsaken all and joined themselves to the train of the despised Nazarene. His Master answers that the recompense should be high—twelve thrones of judgment, upon one of which each of them should be seated as an assessor with Christ. "But," added He significantly, "many that are first shall be last; and the *last shall be first*;" and then went on to illustrate this great law of God's dealings by the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard; the point of which is, that labourers called at the eleventh hour receive a penny, no less than those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. Now we lose much of the force of this teaching if we merely take the Lord's words in a general sense, and do not

regard them in their application to the men who stood around Him, to whom they were in the first instance addressed. "Many that are first shall be last." He glanced mentally, perhaps also with the eye, at Judas Iscariot. He was to be hurled from his Apostolic throne; and another, appointed in a different manner from the original Twelve, was to be raised to the vacant chair. "And the last shall be first." He glanced with Divine foresight at St. Stephen, and at his successor and representative, who sprang from the blood of his martyrdom, St. Paul. Our present business is with the former of these two personages. The twelve Apostles, the vacancy in their number filled up by the election of Matthias, were shining quietly, and reflecting the glory of their Master, like planets in the firmament, which revolve round and are lit by the great central lamp; when suddenly a comet appears in the sky, outshining the planets in lustre, and dragging after it a glorious trail of light. It runs its course rapidly and is very soon quenched in the darkness, while the planets remain shining on as before. This comet was St. Stephen the Deacon and Proto-martyr.

Consider, first, the points in which St. Stephen was "the last."

1. His position was, as we saw in our opening chapter, entirely subordinate. He was one of the seven Deacons; and the Deacons were appointed to give help to the Apostles in the lower part of their functions. While the Apostles gave themselves exclusively to spiritual duties, the Deacons were to be only almoners, composers of quarrels, distributors of this world's wealth. Even this subordinate sphere of usefulness they did not presume to occupy without delegation from the Apostles; who solemnly laid their hands upon Stephen and the rest, and invoked God's Blessing on the new functionaries. Imagine the good Apostles retiring after the Ordination, to feel that now they might devote themselves without distraction to lofty contemplation and spiritual exercises, might seek their Lord's Presence on the Mount, and need no more meddle with disputations on the plain. Yes, good Apostles! but it is with you as it was with Moses of old. God hath taken of the Spirit which is upon you, and has put it upon those who are to bear the burden of the people with you. And the Spirit is resting upon those men; and they have become the Eldad and Medad of the New Testament, prophesying not in the Tabernacle, but in the Camp—preaching

Christ less in connexion with the Temple and the Jewish ritual, and more in connexion with the Gentiles and the whole world of lost sinners, than you yourselves do. Nay, this Stephen may be even called an Elisha, upon whom not a portion merely, but a double portion, of your spirit is resting.

2. One cannot but attach a special sanctity to those who were privileged to hold intercourse with our Lord during His lifetime, who had heard, and seen with their eyes, and looked upon, and whose hands had handled the Word of Life. This was the case with the Apostles. But there is nothing to show that it had been the case with Stephen. Epiphanius, a writer of the fourth century, represents him as having been one of the seventy disciples, but the assertion is wholly destitute of proof; and it is perhaps better to suppose that he was among those who were converted by St. Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost. At all events he did not belong to that highly-favoured body of men, whom Jesus ordained that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils. What store the Apostles themselves set by this association, you may see by St.

Peter's address, defining the qualifications of an Apostle, in Acts i.; "Wherefore of these men *which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*" (observe how he considers association with our Lord, from the beginning to the end of His ministry, to be an indispensable requisite for the office of an Apostle), "beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection."

It is probable that Stephen had never looked upon our Lord, until he saw Him at the right hand of God; that he could not say, as Paul could, "Have I not *seen* Christ Jesus our Lord?" Certain it is that the patient sweetness and majesty of our Lord's features and demeanour had not sunk deep into his soul, as we may presume it had into that of Peter and John; that the echoes of the Master's voice (so gentle usually, so animated and rousing on occasions) did not linger in his ears as in theirs; that his memory was not charged, as theirs must have been, with associations of His gestures and maxims. For indeed, if Stephen had had these prerogatives, how can we account for it that he, a man so full of faith and of the Holy

Ghost, was not even nominated to succeed to the vacancy made by Judas in the college of the Apostles? It is to my mind inconceivable that if the disciples, previously to Pentecost, had had a Stephen among them, and a Stephen who had lived in their circle from the beginning of Christ's Ministry, he should not even have been named for the vacant chair. No, surely. Stephen had not known Christ after the flesh. He had none of the tender memories and associations by which the minds of Apostles were elevated and hallowed. But it pleased the Lord to make him a notable instance of the truth, that *the knowledge of Christ after the Spirit* is the one requirement for sanctity; that the knowledge of Him after the flesh (that is, in His human relationship) is of little avail, and that the impressions of Him, derived from the accounts which have been left to us, are abundantly sufficient to nourish the most fervent devotion, according to that word of St. Peter's, "Whom having *not seen*, ye love."

3. The Apostles had forsaken all to follow Christ. They had renounced every pursuit and every tie which might interfere with the allegiance to which they had been called; and went about the country in attendance upon their

Master, looking for support to the small pittance which from time to time were thrown by grateful souls into the common purse, and often, like Him, having no nightly shelter where they might lay their heads. With Him they shared the world's ridicule, dislike, and contempt, and the hardship of lot which was the expression of those sentiments. They were early called into the vineyard, and they bore the burden and heat of the day. It nowhere appears that Stephen had gone through similar hardships. We read of no houses, or brethren, or father, or wife, or children, or lands, which he had forsaken for Christ's Name's sake. Doubtless he would have forsaken them, if need had been. He had in him the spirit of the most absolute self-abnegation. He was a man whom no persecution could cow, and no hostility to the cause in which he had embarked could cause for a moment to waver. The tale of his martyrdom conclusively shows this. But his fiery trials blazed out upon him all at once with intense fierceness, and enfolded him in the flames; they were not a slow fire, whose heat tells only by long exposure; the language of the Lord concerning the late-called labourers adapts itself with nicety to his case; he could not be said to have borne

the burden and heat of the day. Hardly was his *patience* tried at all; his was too short and evanescent a career.

A word of counsel here. God has infinite forms and varieties of trial, and applies them to the different characters of His servants, according to His knowledge of their temperament and ability. He sees the susceptible point of each character, and graduates and adjusts the trial accordingly; for Peter, a long wearing warfare with a wicked world, and with a heart whose courage sometimes failed him; for John, a wearisome and desolate waiting upon earth, till brother and colleagues are all swept away, and the Jewish system formally abolished; for Stephen, the letting loose upon him, at the opening of his career, all the hounds of hell in one fell pack. Us, perhaps, He subjects only to those little crosses which form the burden of daily life for ordinary persons,—crosses of temper, of disappointed ambition, thwartings of the will in little matters, temptations to spend too much upon ourselves, too little upon God; temptations to live self-indulgently, because we are in affluence, or to be niggardly in almsgiving, because we earn but little. And sometimes from their very smallness and home-

liness these small trials seem contemptible ; and in a certain phase of spiritual feeling we long for something more severe, which shall be a more crucial test of our Christian principle. But we must consider that in crosses, as well as in comforts, God chooses best for us ; and that the homeliest trials, accompanied by His Grace, are quite a sufficient sphere for the cultivation of holiness. It is possible to reach a great height of sanctity by submitting quietly and lovingly to ordinary trials. For who knows but that these ordinary trials, if sufficiently protracted for many years, may equal, by accumulation, the one great strain upon a martyr's faith? If not so great a test of principle, they are, at least, a greater test of patience.

We have seen how, in point of position, privileges, and sacrifices for Christ, St. Stephen was last. We will now trace the several points in which he became first, and thus illustrate the great law in the text.

1. He seems to have outstripped the Apostles in spiritual intelligence, in appreciation of the breadth, comprehensiveness, and spirituality of the Divine plans. St. Stephen was the morning star, who ushered in the dawn of St. Paul's ministry. It is evident that his theology and

that of St. Paul were of the same character. The grand burst of indignation against the Jews, with which his apology concluded, arose, no doubt, from some thought which stirred his spirit peculiarly. What was this thought? The thought was the spirituality of Divine Worship, its independence of place and local associations (the same sentiment which our Lord had announced to the Samaritan woman);—"Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?" Now to dissociate true worship from the Jewish Temple, which had hitherto been the centre of it, was just to unwind the Jewish swaddling-clothes, in which Christianity at its birth had been wrapped, and to give it a free action. And the formal charge against Stephen—calumnious, doubtless, and a misrepresentation of what he had really said,—sufficiently shows that he had declaimed against mere local worship, and had foretold the speedy downfall of Judaism as a system; "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words *against this holy place* and the law. . . . For we have heard

him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall *destroy this place*, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."

Now had St. Peter advanced as far as this in spiritual intelligence? It appears not. He long clung tenaciously to Jewish prejudices. Not till we arrive at the tenth chapter of this book do we find these prejudices loosing their hold upon him; and then this loosening is not the result of the convictions of his own mind; rather God wrenches him violently away from them by the vision of the great sheet let down from heaven, and the various indications of the Divine will with which it was accompanied. And we have no reason to suppose that St. John and the other Apostles were further advanced in spiritual apprehension than St. Peter, who at this time was the captain of the Apostolic band and the chief leader of the Christian movement. They were all still lingering in affection around the Temple and the old Ritual, now decaying and waxing old, and ready to vanish away, while Stephen was for throwing open the windows, and admitting a clearer light and fresher air.

2. Secondly, in zeal for his Master's honour and devotion to his Master's cause, St. Stephen appears to have outstripped his contemporaries.

The bright radiance of his mind, all aflame with zeal and love, seems to have communicated a heavenly lustre to his features; for we read that, "All that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." His faith lifted him altogether above the scene of cruelty and blood in which he was the sufferer, and by its very intensity broke through the crust of the senses and became sight. "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus."

Peter had momentarily wavered in his denial of the Master. Long after, he showed by his dissimulation at Antioch that he was not entirely emancipated from moral cowardice. But Stephen, from first to last, realizes that character which is given of the righteous man in the first morning lesson for his festival; "The righteous is bold as a lion." Though a lamb in the midst of wolves, he stands among his persecutors perfectly undismayed, and presents to them, notwithstanding their extreme fury, a brave front. So complete was the triumph of mind over matter in his case, that the stones which mangle, do not seem to hurt him. In the midst of the murderous hail he falls asleep,

and lays down his head placidly upon the breast which Our Lord threw open to welcome him.

3. Again ; according to the omen conveyed in his name (Stephen means a crown), which I cannot regard as fortuitous, but as a circumstance providentially arranged, he was the first to wear the crown of martyrdom. Martyrdom is the seal of a life's devotion to Christ by the surrender of the life itself for His sake and in His cause. Many have rendered to Him a life-long devotion, without receiving this great honour at its close. They have borne witness to Him by a holy example for years, but have not enjoyed the high prerogative of sealing their testimony with their blood. Stephen was the first who attained this pre-eminence. For many of the Apostles it was also in reserve, and specially for St. Peter ; but when they reached Paradise, they found Stephen already crowned and lying in the Lord's bosom. The labourer called at the eleventh hour had received his wages before those called in the morning. Perhaps they thought, when they recognized him there, how true the Master's parable had turned out to be. But those holy souls had then passed beyond the possibility of grudge and discontent, and Stephen's joy was an augmentation of theirs.

It should be added that, in the brilliancy and number of his miracles, Stephen seems to have rivalled, though he did not outstrip, the Apostles. Of them it is said that, "by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;" while of him there is the almost parallel testimony; "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."

What use now may we make of the maxim of our text, which has received so remarkable an illustration from the career of St. Stephen?

1. The first use is, that we should see contentedly, and, if it be God's will, thankfully, many alterations made in the old platform of religious thought to which, may be, we have been taught to accommodate our views. These are days of progress in every thing, progress, among other things, in religious thought. People are determined to sift every thing, and the result of the sifting is a number of new theories in doctrine, and of new experiments in the practical working of our ecclesiastical system. Old-fashioned and high-principled people are made very sore and very querulous by these novelties. Any departure

from the old system on which they have been brought up, any recasting in a new mould of religious associations which with them have long ago crystalized, they are extremely jealous of—cry out readily against any thing which is suspicious in new views, and are very apprehensive even of that which seems to be good. Now in this adherence to old ways and thoughts there is a danger, while at the same time there is a safeguard. No doubt there is abroad in these latter days a sceptical and a rationalizing spirit, which infects the whole atmosphere of modern religious thought, and against which the love of the old landmarks is an excellent preservative. Still, it is very necessary to take care that a sound conservatism in matters of religion does not degenerate into bigotry. Not every new idea and practice, turned up by the restless spade of modern inquiry, is a bad idea and practice. And as for keeping the platform of popular theology what it was half a century or a quarter of a century ago, it is impossible. It must and will alter its shape; and while, in the course of alteration, error will be abundantly insinuated, and altogether seduce those who have no hold of fundamental truth, many prejudices will drop off from the faith of true believers, and God will

teach them, we may hope, some new and valuable truths, and altogether enlarge and clear their range of vision. I can imagine an early Christian, who was jealous for Christ's Apostles, saying ; " I do not like this Stephen ; he carries matters too far ; he is opening dangerous and possibly licentious lines of thought ; his teaching on the subject of the Temple and Ritual is not zealous merely, but audacious ; not only did Moses give the Ritual, but Our Lord observed it ; not only did God enjoin the building of the Temple, but Christ frequented it and called it His Father's House." Yet to Stephen's view of the Temple and the Ritual the Apostles themselves came round in time ; and when St. Paul had finished his course and passed away, and left only the results of his great work behind him, the Temple and the Ritual had no more hold upon the affections of Christians than a dead leaf had of the tree which once held it. Similarly, if Christ is with His Church still, guiding her into all Truth by His Spirit, we must expect, not indeed that the great fundamentals of Religion, which constitute the Catholic Faith, will ever alter, but that popular views on certain points of religion, which the Church has left open, will from time to time receive modifica-

tions. We must not be jealous and suspicious of a view simply because to us, from our standing point, it seems new and strange. God may still have great things to reveal to His Church, even at this late period of her history. And whatever it pleases Him to reveal, it must be profitable for us to know.

2. Again ; it may be a stimulus to our will in the pursuit of holiness, to reflect upon this law of God's dealing ; " Many that are last shall be " first." Hitherto, may be, we have made little, if any, proficiency in the spiritual life. Our affections have been tepid, our conduct careless and unwatchful, our whole inner man never braced by strict self-discipline and prayer. And while it has been thus with us, life has crept on dreamily from year to year, until now we have arrived at an advanced stage of it, and have realized no improvement. The thought of our backwardness, combined with that of the short time which remains, is chilling, almost paralyzing. But if now at length we are willing to redeem the time, there is comfort in the thought that the last may be first. The Blood of Jesus Christ and the Grace of Jesus Christ are forces as fresh as ever in the spiritual world. Thorough renewal by these forces of the con-

science, the affections, the will, is never out of the question. By fervour and zeal thrown into little acts of service, by a warm embrace of the spiritual life with all our powers, by a self-surrender which shall be the more total because it has been so long postponed, we may even now recover our lost ground. Yea, we may do more. The last may be first. Stephen may outshine St. Peter or St. John. We may, haply, outstrip in the Christian race those who entered upon it with the better part of a life at their disposal, and receive before them the white robe of acquittal, and the palm-branch of victory, and the crown of righteousness, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

## CHAPTER III.

### STEPHEN'S MIRACLES AND CONTROVERSIES.

“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.”—Acts vi. 8—10.

IN these verses is summed up the whole history of St. Stephen between his appointment as Deacon and the impeachment which led to his martyrdom. It is observable that no express mention should be made of his performance of the peculiar functions with which he had been entrusted. Like certain passages of Holy Scripture, which were written in reference to a particular occasion, but which soar high above their context, and in the minds of the Christian public are mere general maxims, detached from all the circumstances which gave rise to them, this Deacon of the early Church shot ahead of

his position, and is not known as a deacon at all, but only as the brave champion of the cause of Christ, and as its first martyr. We do not read of his discreet administration of Church funds, nor of his stilling the murmurs of Hellenistic widows, but of his brilliant miracles, and of his power in controversy.

We must not infer from this that Stephen was neglectful of the duties of the office which had been devolved upon him. But his routine of daily duty needed not recording. The sacred biographers never condescend to be journalists, as the sacred historians are never mere annalists; both give us the salient features of characters and events, those features which rise above the level of commonplace, and strike the eye of an observer at once.

The verses now before us inform us of this interesting particular—that Stephen was a monument of Our Lord's fidelity to His recorded promises. The disciple was faithful to the Master even unto death, and he found the Master faithful unto him both in life and death. Our Lord's parting promise to believers, as recorded by St. Mark, (the last words, according to that Evangelist, which fell from His lips previously to the Ascension,) had been this: "These signs

shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." In pursuance of this promise, "Stephen," we are told, "did great miracles "and wonders among the people," a power which, probably, had been conveyed to him by the laying on of the Apostles' hands.—Then again, in controversy, Our Lord had promised His disciples a mouth and wisdom in the following words; "Settle it therefore in "your hearts, not to meditate beforehand what "ye shall answer. For I will give you a "mouth and wisdom, *which all your adversaries "shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*" St. Luke is the only Evangelist who records the Lord's words in this form; and when he relates in his Acts of the Apostles, how the adversaries of St. Stephen "were not able to resist the "wisdom and the spirit by which he spake," he must surely have glanced back at the promise recorded in his Gospel, and have intended his readers to remark that here was a notable fulfilment of it.

1. First we will say a word of the great

wonders and miracles wrought by this servant of the Lord.

Observe, then, how carefully the writer guards us against the supposition of St. Stephen being a *mere* wonder-worker; how he traces the wonders and the miracles up to a certain principle of his character, and recognizes them as being the outcome of the faith (or of the grace) that was in him. He does not merely record the miracles, but puts us in possession of the secret of them. "Stephen, *full of faith and power*, did great wonders and miracles among the people." Some of the better manuscripts<sup>1</sup> read, "grace and power;" but, whichever reading be adopted, the great scope of the clause is the same; the secret of the miracles was the "faith" or the "grace," and the power of God which that faith drew down, or that grace communicated, to the soul of St. Stephen. The power of God, I say, which the faith drew down. For it is a great truth that the man who acts in faith, whether he works a miracle

<sup>1</sup> As the Vatican (fourth century); the Alexandrine (fifth century?); the Codex Cantabrigiensis (fifth or sixth century).

The manuscript given by Archbishop Laud to the Bodleian Library (whose date is supposed to be the middle of the seventh century), reads; "full of grace and faith."

in the ordinary sense of the word, or only achieves successfully some great enterprise for Christ, which does not seem to involve any suspension of natural laws, does not use, when he acts, any inherent power, but simply lays hold of, and calls into exercise, the power of God and of Christ. Do you understand this? It is very important that you should do so. When St. Peter and St. John had cured the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, they thus explained to the people the secret of the miracle; "Ye men of Israel, why *marvel* ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though *by our own power or holiness* we had made this man to walk?" And again: "His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." That is to say, miracles are not wrought by any inherent power in him who works them, but by the very power of God brought into operation by the faith of the agent. And what is true of miracles is equally true of all the triumphs and successes of Grace. If I win a victory over a besetting sin, if I am brought out unharmed from a great furnace of temptation, it is not in my own strength, but

in Christ's that the result is achieved. Inherent strength of his own the holiest saint in the world has none. Pagan ethics indeed speak of an inherent power which is communicated to the soul by virtuous habits. The Holy Scriptures know nothing of this inherent strength; they resolve all spiritual power (whether miraculous or ordinary) into one simple principle—that utter dependence upon God, which calls God into exercise on behalf of the creature. The very first element of all power (miraculous or moral), according to the Holy Scriptures, is profound self-distrust. The vine-branch has no sap, and consequently no power of fructification, of its own; the sap must be sent up into the branch from the stem; separate the branch from the tree, and you will be convinced that it has no independent life or energy. A little child is quite incompetent to a long walk, in the course of which there are thickets to be marched through, and mountains to be crossed, and rivers to be waded; but if, in confessed impotence, it throws itself into its father's arms as often as it comes to a difficulty, he will carry it through the thickets, and over the mountains, and wade with it across the rivers; and thus only can it be brought safe to its journey's

end. *Sanctification, in its source and efficient cause, is not more inherent than justification.* "In the Lord have I righteousness," doubtless, but not righteousness only; the testimony does not end so, but "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

And thus, by this notice of the grace (or faith) and power by which they were performed, the miracles of St. Stephen are denoted as the miracles of a true prophet; they stand in connexion with the faith or grace which was in him. For it is ever to be remembered that miracles alone are no sufficient criterion of truth, or of a Divine mission in him who works them. Our Lord had solemnly warned His disciples in His last great prophecy: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." But the genuine miracle, wrought by the power of God, may be discriminated not only by the character of the doer, but by its own moral scope and significance. The great object of miracles in the system of religion, is to rouse the mind out of its habitual lethargy, and incline it to listen to Divine truth. Like a bell which summons people to church, where per-

chance they may receive some important message from God, miracles collect the public round an ambassador of God, and give weight to his teaching. It is implied in our narrative that this was the case with Stephen's miracles. They could not fail, and they did not fail, to draw general attention. It was this general attention which aroused the Jews into the active opposition described in the succeeding verse. The connexion is slightly obscured by the mistranslation of a particle. The "then" of the Authorized Version should be exchanged for "but." "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." These miracles, the writer implies, excited much attention; and thus success seemed to attend his ministry. "BUT" (the success was not without its hindrances; the course of the Gospel did not run smoothly) "there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, &c., disputing with Stephen." The miracles gained an en-

<sup>2</sup> The Authorized Version renders the particle "then," and makes it open a new paragraph, so as to break the connexion with what precedes. But the rendering "but" represents better the original meaning of the particle, and establishes the connexion of thought pointed out above.

trance for the Word (and this is the object of true miracles), but the Word met with its obstructions.

2. These obstructions took the shape of controversies in which the Jews were, and felt themselves to be, defeated. It is said by Rabbinical writers that there were in Jerusalem 480 synagogues. Among these, several would be appropriated to the Hellenistic Jews—to those Jews, that is, who, for whatever reasons (whether as being proselytes from the Gentiles or as having adopted foreign customs from the settlement of themselves and their ancestors in Gentile countries), were imbued with the spirit of Greek civilization. Stephen, as we have seen, was, in all probability, a Hellenistic Jew himself; and thus his early associations, as well as his office, would bring him into contact with members of the Hellenistic synagogues. It is somewhat remarkable that among his opponents we should find representatives of each of the three great continents then known. The first synagogue mentioned went under the name of the Synagogue of the Libertines. A libertine is the Latin word for a freedman; and these Libertines were in all probability Jews, whose ancestors had been carried captive to Rome by Pompey

and others, and had there, in process of time, been emancipated from the condition of slavery. Tacitus tells us that, in the reign of Tiberius, an order was made<sup>3</sup> by the senate that four thousand freedmen of the Jewish persuasion should be transported into the island of Sardinia, to make war upon the freebooters who ravaged the island; and that such as were not able to bear arms should be required to migrate from Italy, unless, before a stated day, they formally renounced their religion. Many of them, we may suppose, would migrate to the home of their religion, Jerusalem; and here they would have a synagogue called the Freedmen's Synagogue, representing the Italian Jews. From this synagogue came Stephen's European antagonists.—Cyrene and Alexandria were cities of North Africa. In Cyrene the Jewish residents were a fourth of the whole population. It was a Cyrenian Jew who bore Our Lord's Cross after Him; and another Cyrenian Jew who, previously to St. Paul's first mission, joined in laying hands on him. In Alexandria two out of the five districts of the city were

<sup>3</sup> This decree was passed A.D. 19, eighteen years before the martyrdom of St. Stephen, according to Dean Alford's chronology of the Acts. See Tacitus, Ann. II., 85.

inhabited by Jews. These African Jews would have their representatives in the Holy City, brought thither, some for purposes of devotion, some of trade; and these representatives would soon build their own church<sup>4</sup> and have their own congregation.—The Asiatic opponents of Stephen were furnished by the representatives of the Jews in Cilicia and Asia, this Asia not being the whole Continent to which we give the name, but that portion of it only which constituted the Roman province, and which was made up of four districts—Lydia, Mysia, Caria, Phrygia. The mention of Cilicia is particularly significant. For St. Paul, according to his own testimony, was a native of “Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, brought up, however, in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel.” Now we know from the next chapter that Saul of Tarsus assisted, and was an accomplice, in the martyrdom of Stephen. We

<sup>4</sup> I have supposed three synagogues to be mentioned, which seems to me most likely from the nature of the case. The wording, however, would seem rather to imply two, one for the Libertines, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and another for those of Cilicia and Asia (See Winer’s “Idioms of New Testament Language,” translated by Agnew and Ebbecke. p. 111. Hooker, Philadelphia. 1840). Bengel thinks there was but one synagogue (“florentissima, oculos omnium in se convertens”); and conjectures that Gamaliel was the ruler of it.

may therefore infer, with great probability, that in the previous controversies which led to this martyrdom, the young man whose name was Saul, and who was more exceedingly jealous for the traditions of his fathers, appeared as a disputant against St. Stephen. In his strict Pharasaic education he had all the resources necessary for carrying on a dogged controversy with the rising sect of Christians. Gamaliel, his instructor, was for years president of the Sanhedrim, and may be called a Pharisee of the Pharisees, as being the head of that theological school of Pharisees<sup>6</sup> which (unlike its rival) maintained that tradition was even superior to the law of Moses. Saul, under such training, would be sure to gather materials for the refutation of what he would then consider deadly heresy; and the strong arguments of his epistles, after he became a Christian, show clearly that he had the ability to make the most

<sup>6</sup> The School of Hillel (whose grandson Gamaliel is said to have been). Its rival was the School of Shammai. Those who wish to see the points on which these Schools differed (many of them exceedingly frivolous) may consult Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," Art. "*Pharisees*."

"We are gravely informed that an egg laid on a festival may be eaten, according to the School of Shammai; but the School of Hillel says it may not be eaten."

of the advantages which education had given him.

But the result of controversy with Stephen was, it appears, infinitely disappointing and humiliating to his antagonists. They felt themselves, though they would not confess themselves, worsted. "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." No wonder. As the power by which Stephen wrought miracles was the power of Christ, laid hold of by faith, so the wisdom by which he answered his opponents, was the wisdom of Christ, given him in pursuance of the promise ; "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." The Lord Himself had sticken controversial opponents dumb by this mouth and wisdom. One of His last days upon earth had been spent in baffling those crafty antagonists, who endeavoured to entangle Him in His talk, in answering captious questions, intended to entrap Him, about tribute to Cæsar, about marriage in a future state of existence, about the first and great commandment. Having solved these questions with marvellous wisdom, He then, in His turn, asks His opponents, professing so much skill in the law, what was the

parentage of Christ;—if Davidical, how then doth David call Him Lord? But the opponents are silenced. “No man was able to answer Him a word: neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.”

And this was the beginning of the end with Our Lord. Infuriated with envy, and stung to the quick by his well-merited invectives, His enemies immediately took counsel to kill Him. In the passage before us the disciple treads closely in the steps of his Master. Stephen’s impeachment was arranged, as soon as it was evident that his adversaries were not able to resist the spirit and wisdom by which he spake.

(1). In applying to ourselves what has been said, we will first call attention to the condition of successful controversy. And let me say that what is meant by successful controversy, is controversy which carries the inner convictions of opponents to the truth, not necessarily extorts from them an outward confession of it. This outward confession may be withheld from pride or prejudice, as it was in the case of St. Stephen’s opponents; if our argument carries the inward assent of the mind, that is all which

argument can do ; it cannot force the will. But how very few controversial arguments have really this effect ! How very few are any thing more than a skirmish of words, in which both parties are exasperated, while neither of them is edified, and each retires from the field more determined than ever to maintain his own opinion. So that people who desire edification of the heart shun altogether the atmosphere of controversy. The strife of arguments on the subject of religion is felt instinctively to be a stifling, unhealthy element, noxious to the tender plant of grace. Yet, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the truth, if it be the truth, ought to be able to win its way by its own force—that the Christian should be able to allege a reason of the hope that is in him, and a satisfactory ground for his convictions. Now perhaps our passage may help us to detect the vice in modern controversies, which mars them for the purpose of intellectual conviction, much more of edification. “I will give you,” says Our Lord, “a *mouth* and *wisdom* which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” And again : “It is not ye that speak, but *the Spirit* of your Father which speaketh in you.” The adversaries of Stephen “were not able to resist *the*

*wisdom* and *the Spirit* by which he spake." Here are three qualifications for controversy: "a mouth" (or power of expression), "wisdom" (or power of argument), and, lying deeper than both, and giving effect to both, "a Spirit," "the Spirit of your Father." In some modern controversies, nothing but "the mouth" is exhibited. There is a readiness and fluency of expression on both sides; a promptitude in utterance, and a facility in repartee, without any real solidity in reasoning. Occasionally we rise higher than this. There is an exhibition of "wisdom." The opponents are not superficial religionists, who have borrowed their knowledge of the subject from the periodical literature of the day, and bandy it to and fro with the same thoughtless levity with which they would retail a piece of secular news, but men of more or less learning and thought, who have something sound to advance, and some real justification of their own opinion. But even this is by no means the only condition of successful controversy. It was "the Spirit," as well as "the wisdom," by which Stephen spake, which his opponents were unable to resist. The naked logic of the intellect will not by itself convince; but the logic which is seconded by unction,

and urged with fervour, the logic which is the dictate of a heart in communion with God, carries with it a wonderful weight. This is what our controversies need, to make them edifying, nay, to make them even conclusive, "the Spirit" in them. How often do we prove the absence of the Spirit, by our mode of conducting them! How often do the parties engaged forget entirely the gravity and vast importance of the subjects they are speaking of, and bandying to and fro the sacred Names of God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and speaking with almost levity of such subjects as everlasting punishment, and the existence of Satan, virtually incur the guilt of transgressing the third commandment! How differently would controversy act upon others, and re-act upon ourselves, if while engaged in it our hearts were possessed by the Spirit, and our minds thoroughly chastened by a sense of the awful presence of God, whose cause we are in fact pleading in it! And what an admirable and accurate description of a mind thus chastened does St. Peter give us, when he bids us "give a reason of the hope that is in us *with meekness and fear.*" "Meekness and fear;"—an acknowledgment that we may be wrong, that truth is

not always on one side; and, moreover, that in some controversies we are venturing on very holy ground, where we should put off our shoes from our feet. How lamentably little are these characteristics exhibited in the flippant, pert, confident, often rash discussions, to which the rapid movement of religious opinion among us gives rise. The great clue to right conduct here, as on so many other occasions, is realization of the Presence of God.

(2). Finally, we may draw a profitable lesson from the circumstance of St. Stephen's miracles forming but an introduction to his controversies, breaking open a passage for his arguments to reach the minds and consciences of men. The Gospel was to succeed by the naked force of truth; and the sole object of miracles was to gain an attentive hearing for the messengers of truth. Tell me not of an ecclesiastical authority, then, whose dictates are to be received on its own "*Ipse dixit*"—of a Church, whose dogmas I am bound to accept, without her furnishing satisfactory evidence of them; such an authority and such a Church are flagrantly unscriptural. The holy Apostles, and St. Stephen (who was imbued with their spirit) did not say after cleansing a few lepers, and restoring sight to

the blind, and health to the sick; "These miracles prove that we are sent from God; now listen to us at the peril of your souls, and receive implicitly all that we tell you." Those holy and humble men of heart came down into the lowly valley of disputation; they made a public appeal to the Holy Scriptures; they showed Jesus to be the Christ from documents admitted by their opponents, the Law, the Psalms, the Prophets. Although they had the strongest claims upon the implicit submission of mankind, they never demanded such submission; they rejoiced to see earnest inquiry, and testified to the nobility of mind of those who searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. When men, who could produce the attestation of miracles in favour of their teaching, so far from resting content with their own assertions, condescended to enter the arena of controversy, and exhibit there "a spirit and wisdom," as in the realm of Nature they had exhibited "a power," how can any modern Communion, which has not the attestation of miracles, make a claim to be believed on its own unsupported testimony? Most certainly it is the office of the Church to be "the pillar and ground of the Truth," to maintain truth, to

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assert truth, to offer truth for the acceptance of every man; but she is not to demand belief of a single article without producing the Scriptural warrant for such belief. No! we are not to carry assent by overbearing claims, but to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. We are to set forth the reasonableness, the significance, the beauty of the Truth; its adaptedness to the nature and wants of man; the evidences of it which result not only from what it reveals, but also from its very mysteries. If this be done "in the Spirit" as well as in "wisdom," with meekness and fear as well as with argument, Truth will wind its way into the souls of God's people, and find out those whom it is destined to find out. For Grace will go with it, and Grace can never fail of success.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ARRAIGNMENT AND TRANSFIGURATION OF ST. STEPHEN.

"Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."—ACTS vi. 11—15.

"Then said the high priest, Are these things so?"—ACTS vii. 1.

It was necessary that the volume of Holy Scripture should be brief. A Book so important to the whole human race must be made portable by the hand, and portable by the memory. Accordingly out of a vast mass of materials, which could not have failed to interest devout persons, the sacred writers have been directed to the choice of a very few. If all the miracles of Our

Lord had been recorded, "all the world could not have contained the books which should have been written." The memory therefore of only thirty-three has been preserved to us by the Evangelists. We cannot doubt that these thirty-three are specimen miracles; that they are selected as the most significant, the most instructive, as presenting, in a small compass, the features of all. The lessons to be derived from all the miracles are here; why should others, which yielded no fresh lessons, be detailed? Simple repetition, or in other words, tautology, is monotonous to the mind, and weakens the effect of what is said. "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is weariness of the flesh."

The story of St. Stephen supplied the inspired specimen of martyrdom. Many were the martyrs of the early ages who shed their blood for Christ; and various were their forms of suffering: some were torn by hungry beasts in the arena; others, wrapped in the pitched shirt, were made into a conflagration, to light up the streets of cities at night; others were subjected to tortures, in which the brutal ingenuity of their persecutors sought to protract life, only in order that they might protract suffering. But

the Word of God gives us only one notice, or only one in any detail, of martyrdom. Passing over with the barest mention James, the son of Zebedee, and brother of St. John, whom Herod, we are told, slew with the sword, it sets before us the specimen of St. Stephen. We may be quite sure that this is a perfect specimen, presenting every aspect, and wrapping up every lesson, of Christian martyrdom. Conformity to Christ's sufferings, according to that word of His own, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized;"—you have it here. Brave protest for Christ, in the very teeth of those who have it in their power to kill the body, which protest is of the essence of martyrdom—it is here. Joy in the hope set before the martyr;—it radiates from Stephen's face. Love to persecutors and foes, mingled with a stern faithfulness towards them—it exhales, like a precious perfume, from Stephen's last prayer. Studied imitation of Christ in the act of dying—nowhere (as we shall see by and by) is this more remarkably exhibited than in the death of Stephen.

The providential conformity to the image of Christ, however, (as distinct from the studied

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imitation of Him,) is the first thing that strikes us in the present passage of the story. What befell the disciple, is what befell the Master over again. The member is suffering just as the Head had suffered before. Stephen's controversial antagonists, infuriated by defeat in argument, resorted to calumny and violence. Agents were employed to set about a story of his having blasphemed Moses and God. When the story got wind, it roused the public indignation of all classes—of "the elders," who represented the old patriarchal magistracies, of "the scribes," who were theologians by profession, and of the common people. Against the servant of Christ were arrayed authority, learning, numbers. His enemies having poisoned the mind of the judges against him, and so ensured an adverse verdict at the trial, thought that matters were now ripe for their proceedings. With precipitate violence (as is sufficiently indicated by the word used to describe his apprehension—a word which is also applied to the seizure of the demoniac by the legion of devils, and to the seizure of St. Paul's vessel by the fury of the wind), they laid hands on him, and hurried him away to the high court of justice, called the Sanhedrim. The members of this court, which consisted of

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priests, scribes, and elders, sat in the form of a semicircle, the president (who was on this occasion the high priest), being in the middle of the curve, and a scribe, whose duty it was to sum up the votes, and register the sentence, being posted at each extremity. In the centre of the line which subtended this curve, stood the prisoner at the bar, his accuser being on his left hand, and his counsel (when he had one) on the right, in allusion to which latter custom of Jewish courts the Psalmist says, "The Lord shall stand at the right hand of the poor" (act as his advocate), "to save his soul from unrighteous judges."

Stephen, then, was placed before this tribunal, which represented to him the rank, the learning, and the priesthood of his nation. The paid agents of the Hellenist synagogues advancing to his left, pronounced the formal accusation; "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place," (the Temple, near which, or in a precinct of which, the Court was held,) "and the law." It is not a little curious to see how much more carefully guarded are the terms of the formal accusation than those of the calumny which had been set about among the people. There is a touch of nature here, as

well as an instance of fidelity and accuracy in the narrator. When the actual deposition is made, and the witnesses feel that their words may be called in question, we no more hear those big terms,—“blasphemous words against *Moses* and against *God*.” God is exchanged for “the holy place,” and Moses is exchanged for “the Law,” “the customs which Moses delivered unto us.” Full well the witnesses knew that no word had ever passed Stephen’s lips derogatory to the authority of Moses, much less derogatory to God’s glory, though in their general talk they had not hesitated to place this construction upon his declaiming against a merely local worship and a merely ritual religion. Appearing now before a court, they feel tied to a little more of fact, and a little less of assumption; and all they profess to have heard the victim say is; “This Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered us.”

No doubt he had said things very much to this effect. His Master had predicted that of all those great buildings there “should not be left one stone upon another that should not be thrown down;” and Stephen had echoed this prediction. Stephen, too, had probably seen further into the mystery of the admission of

the Gentiles into the bosom of the Church than other Christians of his day, and very possibly may have preached, as Paul did after him, that Jewish rites, though instituted by God, and proper to be retained as marks of a national covenant, were non-essential to salvation. But if Stephen had indeed thus foretold the destruction of the Temple and the downfall of the Jewish ceremonial system, why are the witnesses who deposed to this circumstance stigmatized as false witnesses? The answer is instructive. Because, while certifying a matter of fact, they wantonly and wilfully misrepresented the spirit of his teaching. They took his words out of the context which interpreted them, and gave them a totally different colour. Doubtless, like his Master before him, Stephen had the profoundest veneration for the Temple and the Law. But then he had at the same time an intelligent apprehension of the place which the Temple and the Law held in the system of true religion, and of the purposes they were intended to subserve. He saw that the Temple with its ordinances, and the Law with its ritual, were the elements of a preparatory discipline, which schooled the minds of men for the reception of Christ by faith. And now "that faith is come,"

he would say with Paul, "we are no longer under a schoolmaster." A man who says that a school book may be parted with when education is quite finished, by no means implies that school books are unnecessary while education is in progress. And if the words "School books are valueless" were separated from his explanation of the circumstances which might render them so, and alleged against him, the witness would be a false witness, however certainly, as a matter of fact, the man might have uttered the words. Be it ever remembered that by telling only half the truth we may convey quite as wrong an impression as by a downright contradiction of truth. And in representing to ourselves or others the views of those who do not belong to our school of religious thought, let us be on our guard, lest we break the ninth commandment, against misconstruction of this sort. Nothing is easier, and, alas! nothing commoner in these days, than to make large and sweeping charges against those who maintain suspected propositions, while wilfully ignoring their explanation of what they hold. I have no right to say that a man is a despiser of God's Ordinances, because he happens not to give the same high place in the religious system to Sacraments

which I do ; nor that he is a despiser of the Word of God, because he may doubt the genuineness and authenticity of one of the Canonical Books, or thinks that Scripture was never meant to teach scientific truth ; nor that he denies the inspiration of Holy Writ, because he denies its verbal inspiration ; nor that he impugns the Blessed Atonement, because he asserts certain popular views of it to be mistaken and unscriptural ; nor that he refuses to recognize any authority in the Church, because he thinks that the Scripture must exercise a check upon this authority. The false witness borne against Stephen is an instance of the gross and wicked injustice which may be done by isolating a man's language from an explanatory context, with which in his mouth it has been surrounded.

Stephen heard the calumnious charge laid against him. It is not hard to see what course natural feeling would take in the heart of a man so accused. In the first place there would be indignation at the substantial injustice of the charge. Then would come perplexity and dumb-foundedness, as soon as it became apparent that the charge was so worded, as that he could not meet it with a simple flat denial. With these

feelings would mingle fear, in a case like this, where a single man stood alone against the authorities and powers of the world, and the fury of his antagonists, and their determination to destroy him, was made evident by their demeanour. And these feelings would produce a painful discomposure and hesitation of mind, which would communicate itself to the features of the accused. But in that exciting moment Stephen retained the most perfect serenity of spirit. His mind at that momentous crisis was buoyant with hope, and radiant with joy. And the hope and joy, as strong emotions frequently do, struggled through the crust wherewith, under ordinary circumstances, the features overlay the expression, and became apparent in his countenance. When the accusation was advanced, every member of the court turned their eyes on him, to see how the servant of Christ, when thus brought to bay, would look. Greatly were they surprised, and for the moment disconcerted, by his demeanour. This was no wan and haggard culprit, with the furrows of anxiety drawn deep along his countenance; those features spoke of nothing but communion with the invisible God, and of the love, joy, and peace which are the result of such communion; "they saw his face

as it had been the face of an angel." The words very possibly indicate, not only the serene joy shed over the features of the martyr by the holy elevation of his soul, but also a supernatural lustre,—a lower grade of transfiguration. When Our Lord was transfigured, "His face," we are told, "did shine as the sun." And it is quite probable that by the intense contemplation of Our Lord, a contemplation which, as we read in the next chapter, pierced through the veil of matter, and passed from the region of faith into that of sight, the person of this holy man intercepted and reflected a beam or two of his Master's Glory, and that the words of the Christian Poet, respecting the Church generally, received in him a literal and physical fulfilment:—

"The Church above, the Moon below,  
A wondrous race they run ;  
But all their lustre, all their glow,  
Each borrows from its Sun."

The members of the council are momentarily cowed, as the devil's agents are so often, by the majesty of holy Innocence; and when the high priest puts the question to the accused, which invites him to speak in his defence, he does so in a mild, almost relenting, tone, without

any of that frenzied virulence which characterized the proceedings of the accusers, and ultimately of the court;—"Are these things so?" Possibly the radiance of Stephen's countenance reminded them of that passage in their Law, which describes the shining of the skin of Moses' face. That lustre was the result of the legislator's talking with God; and it might have suggested to them that Stephen had been holding similar communion, and, as in Moses' case, so in Stephen's, the beholders might have been impressed with fear.

Now could there have been any nearer approach than this to the circumstances in which Our Blessed Lord had been placed? He too had been apprehended with sudden violence by a band of men and officers from the Chief Priests and Pharisees. In His case, as in that of His follower, an attempt was made by the malignity of His enemies to suborn agents who might appear against Him; for we read that "the chief priests, and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death." He too was brought before the Sanhedrim. And there false witness was borne against Him. And the false testimony in His case, as in that of His disciple, was

false, not because it attributed to Him words which He had never spoken, but because it totally misrepresented His meaning. The charge was ; “ We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.” Words resembling these He no doubt had said, on an occasion referred to by St. John ; “ Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” But here He was speaking, as the Evangelist informs us, of the Temple of His Body. The “ *I will destroy* ” indeed was altogether gratuitous, for it was the agency of the Jews to which He had attributed the destruction of His body ; “ Destroy ” [ye] “ this Temple,” and, in speaking of the demolition of the literal Temple to His disciples, He had simply predicted it, without saying that He Himself would accomplish it. Yet no doubt in His words taken literally there had been ground for the charge, while in their real scope and significance there was none whatever.—Then, finally, the demeanour of Stephen, which made his enemies momentarily recoil, had found its counterpart in Our Lord. When with meek and dauntless demeanour He went forth to meet His captors, and took up in His mouth, in answer to their inquiry for Jesus of Nazareth,

the designation of the most High God, "I AM<sup>1</sup>,"—they quailed for a little moment beneath the self-possession and majesty of His mien;—"as soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground." It was the thorough interpenetration of Stephen's mind by the Spirit of his Master, and the reflection of his mind in his features, which produced in his case a similar panic. The presiding judge himself is thrown back by the prisoner's mien, and asks, with a tameness which strangely contrasts with the general vehemence of the proceedings, "Are these things so?"

We can easily conceive that, to Stephen's mind, the consciousness of this providential conformity to his Master's image was the greatest possible source of consolation, nay, was perhaps the secret of that supernatural joy which radiated from his countenance. "Against Him, too, they were infuriated; they dragged Him, too, before this court; against Him, too, they set up false witnesses; this experience of the malignity of men and devils, He knows it all, He sees it all, He sympathizes with it all; I am following hard

<sup>1</sup> I hope I am right in this view of the significance of the *Ἐγώ εἰμι* in John xviii. 5. At all events the words have this sublime meaning in chapter viii. 58.

in His footsteps ; He is drawing me after Him through the Red Sea of blood and suffering, and I shall emerge by and by on yonder heavenly shore, whither my enemies can no more follow me than Pharaoh's host could follow the children of Israel, to sing my hallelujahs to Him for His Grace." It is almost impossible but that some such thoughts as these must have flashed through Stephen's mind at his arraignment, and these must have been the thoughts which lit up his countenance with such an illumination, and made his features a transparency. The Spirit of which we are told that he was full, took hold of the facts of his experience, and used them as a most comfortable and joyous assurance of the glory which should follow, according to that word, written long after by one of his persecutors, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God : and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

The application to ourselves is summed up in the words of another Apostle ; "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had

happened unto you ; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

"*Think it not strange ;*" do not account it alien or foreign to the usual experience of Christians ; it is the normal state of things ; it is a compliance with, not a departure from, the ordinary law. If the Captain of our Salvation could only be made perfect through suffering, let not the soldiers in His army claim to be exempt from the operation of the same law. The cross, in one or other of the many shapes in which it may be laid upon us, is the essential note of a Christian, and a discipline necessary to prepare us for the crown ; and therefore, when the cross is laid upon us, we should rejoice, as Stephen did in the present resemblance which is thus established between us and our Master, and in the prospect of future conformity which that present resemblance guarantees. And let me add, that the more fiery our trial is, the closer is the providential conformity with Christ which it establishes, and the spiritual conformity with Christ which it holds out the means of attaining. *His trial was an overwhelming one. Its mysterious anguish wrung from His frame great*

drops of blood, and drained from His human spirit every drop of consolation. Such extreme anguish was made necessary in His case by the work of Atonement, which He had in hand; and the God who "afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men," never envelopes His merely human children in such total darkness. But, it may be said, that the more crushing a man's afflictions, the more sweeping his calamities, the more is he assimilated in circumstances to Christ. Are you racked with severe bodily pain? Are you deprived of the solace of human sympathy? Is your mind clouded over with doubts and fears, doubts of your own acceptance or of God's love, fears of death, or judgment, or God's displeasure? Or is it paralysed for prayer, stupid and dull in spiritual exercises, and apparently wanting in all spiritual sensibility? These are sore trials, but Christ bore the like of them all, so far as they could be borne by the holy, harmless, and undefiled One; and they are part of the discipline which is to bring you into conformity to Him. Accept them as such. Think that you hear Him saying to you, "Come, take up thy cross and follow me." Think that you are Simon the Cyrenian, and that you are required (Oh great dignity and

mighty privilege!) to help on the loving Lord with His load towards Calvary. Be sure that this particular cross is chosen with reference to your strength and powers of endurance, and that the more painful it is to flesh and blood, the greater is the desire which your Lord expresses for your spiritual conformity to Himself. And His yoke shall be easy to you, and His burden light, and in bearing it you shall find rest to your soul.

Finally, let the supernatural radiance of Stephen's features, caught, as I have observed, from the contemplation of His Master, remind us of the spiritual transfiguration which should bedaily proceeding in ourselves. "Be not conformed to this world," says the Apostle, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." And the secret of this moral transformation is disclosed to us in another passage: "We all, with "open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of "the Lord, are changed into the same image, from "glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the "Lord." Are we beholding the glory of Christ in the Gospel mirror, stedfastly setting Him before us in all His offices of grace, as our one great object of contemplation? Do we love to represent Him to our minds, to dwell with affectionate

reverence on the details of His holy life, and to treasure up in our hearts each touching incident of His passion? Thus gradually will the corroding earthliness of our minds be checked in its progress, our moral features will borrow some of the lustre of His image; and when, at the Resurrection, the finishing stroke is put upon this image, and the sin which has marred it is cast out of our nature, that word of the Psalmist will find a blessed fulfilment in us; "When I  
"awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied  
"with it."

## CHAPTER V.

### ST. STEPHEN'S APOLOGY.—PART I.

“And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve Me in this place. And He gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him labour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers

found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.—ACTS vii. 2—17.

OUR Blessed Lord had expressly foretold to His Apostles that "men should deliver them up to the councils," Matt. x. 17 (a term which may perhaps include the Sanhedrim, as well as the lesser courts of judicature, of which there were two at Jerusalem, and one in every other town of Palestine). And He had made to them a distinct assurance that in this contingency, so perplexing to unlearned and ignorant men, it should be given them what they should speak; "for it is not ye that speak," said He, "but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." St. Stephen was not an Apostle; but an exactly similar assurance, recorded by St. Luke (xii. 11), had been given to the disciples at large. On the ground of this assurance, we approach St. Stephen's apology with the deepest possible awe and veneration. This speech was unpremeditated; there was no time for the orator to digest

the argument, even had such preparation been allowed by Our Lord's words; for, as we have seen, Stephen had been caught up in a sudden outburst of popular fury, like a vessel at sea by a hurricane. Yet when his speech is deeply studied, there appears in it a wonderful order and method, and a still more wonderful suitability to the occasion, so that we stand aghast at the shallowness of Michaelis's<sup>1</sup> criticism, who

<sup>1</sup> "The speech delivered by the martyr Stephen in the seventh chapter of the Acts, is of a different description (from those of St. Paul). It is a learned discourse, pronounced by a speaker *who was totally unacquainted with the art of oratory*. Stephen spoke without any preparation, and though he had certainly a particular object in view, to which the several parts of his discourse were directed, yet it is difficult to discover this object, because his materials are not regularly disposed. It is true that he was interrupted, and prevented from finishing his harangue: but an orator, who is accustomed to speak in public, and has learned methodical arrangement, will discover, even at the commencement of his oration, the purport of his discourse. In Stephen's speech we meet with numerous digressions, and *literary remarks of which we cannot perceive the tendency*."

Further down in the same section, the writer gives the following account of the historical discrepancies between St. Stephen's apology and the Book of Genesis:—

"My reason for thinking it probable that St. Luke had a copy of Stephen's speech is, that it contains some mistakes of memory, and some inaccurate expositions, which St. Luke himself must have known to be such, but which he retained because he found them in his copy. Perhaps this copy was delivered to him by St. Paul, who was not only present at St.

finds in it a want of oratory, and still more at that of Erasmus', who has the hardihood to say that there are many things in this oration not much bearing on the point which Stephen had in hand to prove. We assert, on the other hand, that there is a well-defined plan in this speech, though doubtless the fury of the audience prevented its being prosecuted to the end, and that every sentence of it has some deep allusive reference to the points to be proved. If this reference had been more explicit, such was the temper of the court that the defendant would

Stephen's speech, but was at that time a zealous adversary of the Christians; and being at the same time learned in the Law was able as well as willing to detect whatever mistakes might be made by the speaker." *Introduction to the New Testament*, by J. D. Michaelis, translated by Herbert Marsh, B.D., F.R.S. Cambridge, Deighton and Rivington, 1801. Vol. iii. ch. 8, sect. 3. Pp. 333, 334.

If, as Michaelis supposes, St. Paul gave a copy of the speech to St. Luke, it is interesting to observe that neither of them thought it right to remove the superficial appearances of inaccuracy, of which both of them must have been quite aware.

<sup>2</sup> "Apparet orationem Stephani clamoribus obstrepentium Judæorum interruptam fuisse. Neque enim satis alioqui respondet hic finis, tam alte repetito principio, præsertim cum in ea multa sint, quæ non ita multum pertinere videntur ad id quod instituit." Erasmus. *Annotaciones in Novum Testamentum*, ad loc. Basileæ. A.D. 1535. P. 310.

Speaking of this passage, Bengel says, "Nullo modo assentiri Erasmo aliisque debemus." *Gnom.*, ad loc.

not have been suffered to proceed even so far as he did. We feel that, in virtue of Christ's promise above quoted, the whole oration, though not without its tangles and difficulties, burns and glows with the fire of Inspiration; and we look upon it as Moses looked on the burning thorn in the wilderness, dreading to say that the words which were given to Stephen in that hour were not the most suitable which could have fallen from his mouth.

This speech is valuable not only from what it contains, but also as throwing light upon that perplexed question, What is Inspiration? It will be observed by an attentive reader that in one or two places St. Stephen, quoting the Old Testament from memory, mixes together (though in such a manner as in nowise to affect his argument) separate incidents. Thus he speaks of Jacob as having been buried in *Sychem*, whereas the Book of Genesis makes the cave of the field of Machpelah his burying-place. The *sons* of Jacob were, according to Jewish traditions, buried in *Sychem*; and Stephen, mentioning in one breath the death and burial both of the father and sons, overlooks the fact that the *father* was buried elsewhere. Again, he speaks of *Abraham* as buying ground in *Sychem*

of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem. This purchase was really transacted by *Jacob*, *Abraham's* purchase having been the cave of Machpelah, in another part of the country; but in so rapid a summary the speaker very naturally blends the two incidents into one, so as to give the appearance of historical inaccuracy. These features of the address, while they do not in the slightest degree affect the argument, or detract from its conclusiveness, serve to show two important points—one, that even the highest form of Inspiration is not dictation; that the human mind (with its ordinary faculties of memory, imagination, and reasoning) is called into play, and not merely the pen or the organs of speech; and the other, that the highest form of Inspiration consists with such apparent inaccuracies as do not in the least affect the ideas which have to be conveyed, or the great scope of the passage. "The kingdom of God," says the Apostle, "is not in word, but in power." And we may say the same of Inspiration. It does not reside in the mere outward expression, but in the idea expressed, which, being God's idea, not man's, must be forcible, must be eloquent, must be cogent, when by the Holy Spirit's power it is brought into contact with

the human mind. Let us beware of that false reverence for the Holy Scriptures called Bibliolatry, or Bible worship, which, like all false reverence, is sure to engender (by a natural reaction) gross irreverence. The pernicious rationalism of the day, which represents the Bible as the expression of devout human reason, as the product not of God's mind but of man's, and thus degrades this blessed Book to the level of an ordinary work of piety, is partly owing to the circumstance of Christians having surrounded the Bible with a superstitious or false reverence, and having made claims for the Bible which the Bible never makes for itself. Very much as the Romanists have deified the bread and wine of the Eucharist, the Protestants have deified the Bible, and have virtually said of it, not "This Book is an unerring guide to a knowledge of God's will and to the way of salvation," but, "This Book is God." And very much as the gross idolatry of the elements in the Eucharist produced by reaction a low and irreverent estimate of that Sacrament, and gave birth to Zwingle's error, according to which the rite is nothing more than a commemoration, instituted under a beautiful and touching natural sentiment; so, exactly by the same law of human thought, the unscriptural


claims made for Scripture, and its deification by Protestants, have given occasion to the rationalist to put Scripture on a level with human compositions, and blasphemously to say that it does not enshrine the mind and will of God. The Jews treated the Bible in a similar superstitious way, and, by treating it thus, lost altogether the significance of their Scriptures, though that significance was plain as day to simple souls, who did not burrow among letters, and words, and accents, but asked candidly what the Scriptures meant. A Pharisee of Our Lord's day could not see that Moses or Isaiah had predicted Our Lord; but he could have told you exactly how many words, and letters, and accents, the Law contained, and he could have pointed confidently to the passages of the Law, which he wore on the arm and the forehead, as amulets which secured him effectually from evil. But surely it is not too much to ask of Christians that they shall entertain for the Holy Scripture a somewhat more enlightened reverence than the Jew. It is not too much to ask that they shall seek to rise above its words to its power, to throw aside the dead rind of the expression, and extract the living kernel of the idea. Ah! it makes one's heart ache to think how blind a

man may be to saving truth with the New Testament in his hand and in his head; how he may be apt and fluent in quotation, nay, great in criticism, and competent to form a judgment on the value of different readings, and yet shall have altogether missed (as a person may miss an object which is under his hand) the great subject of all Scriptural testimony, which is Jesus Christ and He crucified.

This defence of St. Stephen's, like every work of the Divine Spirit, is many-sided, and has several aspects. We may discriminate in it three<sup>3</sup> great purposes, which run through its whole contexture, and which, like three long strings in a twisted rope, are firmly plaited together. One of Stephen's objects (although it is a subordinate one) is to defend himself from the charge brought against him of blaspheming the Temple and the Law. He is a defendant, speaking in his own defence. And in his way of conducting his defence his *wisdom* is transparent. Another (and more prominent) object was to show that the reverence with which his antagonists sur-

<sup>3</sup> This distinction of three strains of sentiment in St. Stephen's speech is borrowed from Dean Alford's Greek Testament. I have taken his idea, and drawn it out *in extenso*.

rounded the Temple and the Law was false and superstitious, and had really no foundation in their own Scriptures. He is a controversialist as well as a defendant, and re-echoes before the authorities of his nation the controversial arguments which he had hitherto employed in the Hellenist synagogues. And in his way of conducting controversy, not his wisdom only, but his *truth*, in avowing his own convictions, is transparent. A third object, though not so fully developed as the two former, was to teach Christian Doctrine. The overthrow of his controversial adversaries, in which he had hitherto been so successful, was nothing to him if he could not at the same time win for the truth an entrance into their minds. He appears not simply as a defendant and a controversialist, but also as a preacher; and his address bursts at every pore, not indeed with explicit statements of Christian doctrine (which would not have been tolerated), but with allusive references to Christ. Only once is Christ mentioned in it, and then not as the Saviour, but as the Just One; but the speaker's mind is evidently full of Christ, and if you observe him closely, you will see that he is always glancing in the direction of the persecuted, rejected, and yet exalted and glorified, Saviour. And by glances love is often



shown. Stephen's mental glances at the Saviour show intense love to the Saviour, and love to souls, for which the Saviour died.

Let me here say one word of wholesome application.

There are many persons who will not allow any thing in a Christian preacher, or accept any thing from him, but an explicit statement of the various offices of Christ, as our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption. They are for forcing the clergy to ring the changes unceasingly upon this one theme, whatever their text may be; and the result is, of course (how can it be otherwise under this condition?), an intense monotony, which has made sermons proverbial for dulness. But the real security for the appearance of Christ in a sermon is not an obligation laid upon the preacher from without to restrict himself to one class of topics, but that his own mind and heart shall be full of Christ. If Christ is in the mind and heart, Christ will come out of the mouth in some profitable form or another, though by no means always in the same form. Let the Cross be the ground-plan of the preacher's thoughts, and this ground-plan will be apprehended instinctively by the listener, just as in a great cathedral we

feel that the building is of cruciform structure, though the Cross may not be every where paraded before our eyes. Glances at Christ are often likely to be as effectual as explicit preaching of Him.

The three elements in Stephen's speech, apologetic, controversial (or polemical), and didactic, correspond well to the periods of Church History. First comes the apologetic period, when the Church was thrown on her defence against Jews and Gentiles. To this period are to be referred the apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian. This period was succeeded by one of controversy, during which the Church was in antagonism, not to heathens or Jews, who avowedly denied, but to heretics and traitors in the camp, who sought to corrupt her doctrine. Then came the age of systematic Theology, when the Christian Creed, having been fully developed by the controversies of the preceding era, was, in all its completeness, definitely taught by the Church.

I will now take that portion of the speech which stands at the head of this Lecture, and give a free paraphrase of it, detaching the apologetic, controversial, and didactic elements, and presenting them separately to the hearer, and expanding the insinuations of St. Stephen in a

way which he dared not do, lest his mouth should have been (as indeed it was at last) prematurely closed.

*Apologetic :—*

“Brethren of my own age and station, and you grave and reverend seniors of the Council, this charge represents me as undervaluing the traditions of our national history. I shall best rebut it, then, by running over the chief points of that history, and avowing my firm and full belief of them. I believe, with you, that the glorious God appeared to the great ancestor of our race; that He called him miraculously, and drew him, by one or two stages, into the land which you now inhabit. I believe that He made a promise to him of this land—a promise, however, which was accompanied with an intimation that it should not be fulfilled for a long period of years, during which his seed should dwell in a Gentile country. I believe, also, that God instituted the Sacrament of Circumcision, by which I and all that hear me were admitted into covenant with Him on the eighth day after our birth. I believe that this covenant and promise of God travelled down in the line of the patriarchs from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to

Jacob, and from Jacob to the founders of our twelve tribes. And, finally, I believe that these patriarchs were transported, after their death, into this favoured land, and that their bones lie among us."

*Controversial:—*

"But you will remember that the facts I have recited imply that Abraham was originally a foreigner, when he received God's call, and that before the institution of the legal Sacrament of Circumcision, and his formal entrance thereby into covenant with God, the promise was made to him. You will remember, also, that this friend of God never himself held a single inch of ground in this country. You will remember that Israel and his family sojourned for years in heathen Egypt, and that their possessions in this land were limited to the small sod of earth in which their corpses were laid. May you not, then, be setting a superstitious value upon ground of which your illustrious progenitors, the admitted favourites of Heaven, had certainly no actual tenure?"

*Didactic:—*

"And one other point in this early history of your race deserves your most careful attention. It is the fortunes of that younger son of Jacob

who, though his father's favourite, was despised and set at nought by his brethren. They handed him over to Gentiles, and they thought, in the wickedness of their heart, that he was effectually made away with. But God set his heart upon this rejected one, to raise him to a throne. His brethren were to see him again, though in an altered condition, and they were to bow themselves before him to the ground. And ultimately they were to recognize in the lord of all Egypt, their rejected, sold, and lost brother.—Men of Israel, let me ask whether there has not been One among you of late, a Prophet of your brethren, bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, whom ye have despised and rejected, and delivered Him up into the hand of the Gentiles, as the patriarchs dealt with Joseph? And let me ask whether it may not have pleased God to exalt this despised Brother of yours to Resurrection Glory and to the Throne of the Universe; and whether He is not even now waiting for you to confess in penitence and faith the grievous wrongs you have done Him, and to give Him the kiss of homage as the Lord's Anointed?"

If Stephen meant to insinuate all this, we

may perhaps ask why he was not more explicit. The reason is obvious. The Jews were in an infuriated state, their minds chafed by his controversial successes in the synagogue. And to have been explicit at the outset of his defence would have been, as he saw from their temper, to cut off the only opportunity he had of declaring the truth of Christ to the authorities of his country. It is probable that, had he not been interrupted by the violence of his enemies, the applications of the Jewish history (which in our paraphrase we draw out into detail, *as we go on*) would have come out in one grand burst of indignation *at the end*, wherein every note sounded in the apology—stern reproof, pathetic appeal, indignant repudiation of unfounded charges—would have been heard in full diapason. But by the time that he would have wound up his argument, had he been suffered to proceed, he was in Paradise with his Master; and the gnashing teeth and menacing gestures of Pharisees, were exchanged for the gratulations of angels and the song of welcome and triumph which flowed from their harps. We cannot but admire the profound wisdom which, under such circumstances, secured for him a hearing of any length at all. Our Lord had bidden His disciples be

wise as serpents, no less than harmless as doves. And the serpentine wisdom is exemplified in Stephen's defence, no less than the dove-like innocuousness in his prayer for his murderers. It was profoundly wise to suspend their animosity, and bring them into a mood to listen, by recounting the leading events of their national history. Of that national history every Jew felt proud; for although indeed it recorded their constant sinning against privileges, yet it emphasized the privileges against which they sinned. They were never weary of hearing it said or implied—"The Lord hath chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." And then, again, the national history was a part of the living oracles with which they, as the Church of the day, were entrusted; and no man who admitted these living oracles, and founded his argument upon them, could well in their esteem be a heretic. So that if to bring a hostile audience into a mood to listen be an attribute of the gift of oratory, it must be admitted that this simple servant of the Lord, whatever criticisms Michaelis may hazard upon him, managed his case with the utmost dexterity, and that in no other way probably could the San-

hedrim have been induced to listen to so much of truth as he contrived to tell them.

But who is that young<sup>4</sup> man in a corner of the council-room, small and undignified in person, and disfigured by a slight twist of the body, but with keen grey eyes glancing restlessly to and fro under somewhat contracted and overhanging eyebrows<sup>5</sup>? His complexion is transparent; and

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Howson thinks that though St. Paul is called "a young man" at the time of St. Stephen's martyrdom, "he was no longer in the first opening of youth. This is evident from the fact that he was appointed to an important ecclesiastical and political office immediately afterwards. Such an appointment he could hardly have received from the Sanhedrim before the age of thirty, and probably not so early, for we must remember that a peculiar respect for seniority distinguished the Rabbinical authorities." (Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles*, vol. i. p. 73). The truth is that in Holy Scripture the word "young" is used with much greater latitude than among ourselves. King Rehoboam is called "young and tender-hearted" at the age of forty-one. (2 Chron. xii. 13, and xiii. 7.)

<sup>5</sup> "It is remarkable that, in both the traditional accounts of St. Paul's personal appearance which we possess, he is said to have had contracted eyebrows." (Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, vol. i. p. 160.) The traditional accounts alluded to are given further on in this valuable work at p. 240, vol. i. One is from Malelas, a Byzantine historian of uncertain date, supposed by some to have lived in the ninth century, by others two centuries earlier. He wrote a chronicle of the world. His description of St. Paul, which Dr. Howson quotes, may be translated as follows:—"St. Paul, while he was yet alive, was short in

the colour comes into his cheek, and his brow becomes stern and rigid, as Stephen proceeds with his argument, and makes insinuations unfavourable to the Jews. He is one of the brethren, not one of the fathers whom Stephen addressed; that is, though a member of the Cilician synagogue, he is no member of the Sanhedrim, or high court of justice; for he is a young man, and in all likelihood unmarried, whereas it was one of the qualifications<sup>6</sup> for a

“stature, bald, grizzled on his head and chin, with a good nose, grayish eyes, *joined eyebrows*, a white skin, a florid countenance, a fine beard; having a smiling expression, thoughtful looking, with moral weight and worth in his countenance; affable and pleasant, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and endowed with the gift of healing.” Joannis Malelæ *Chronographia*. Oxonii, 1691. Pp. 331, 332.

The other is from the celebrated *Ecclesiastical History* of Nicephorus (fourteenth century): “St. Paul was a little man, and contracted as to the size of his body, which had, as it were, a twist. His person was small and stooping; he was white in his face, and his countenance had the appearance of advanced age; his head was bald, and his eyes bright and animated. *He had eyebrows which curved downwards*, his nose was well-turned, and covered a large proportion of his countenance; he had a somewhat luxuriant beard, bushy and flowing, grizzled (as was also his head) with white hairs.” Nicephorus, *Eccles. Hist.* Lutetiæ, 1630. Tom. i. p. 196A.

<sup>6</sup> “One of the necessary qualifications of members of the Sanhedrim was that they should be the father of children, because such were supposed more likely to lean towards

seat in the High Court that a man should be a father of children, in order that he might be the more disposed to show mercy in judgment. His name is Saul of Tarsus. He is the chosen instrument by whose preaching by and by God is to make the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world. See how eagerly he drinks in every word that is said! how the Christian orator's arguments sink deep into his soul!

By and by he will reproduce those very arguments. First, he will reproduce them as a reporter. St. Luke the Evangelist, the writer of the Acts, was an intimate friend and companion of St. Paul. And it is in the highest degree probable that, just as the Magnificat, and the incidents of the Divine Infancy and Childhood, were derived by St. Luke from the Blessed Virgin herself, so the account of Stephen's

"mercy." See Selden, quoting from Maimonides: "In nullo Synedriorum co-optabant quempiam cui proles deesset, unde fieret misericors:" and again from the Jerusalem Gemara (one of the authorized commentaries on the Talmud, or oral law of the Jews), "He who has never had children of his own is fit for the administration of justice in cases of property, but not in cases of life and death" II. ix. 4, f. 1422. If this was the case when Stephen was tried, and if Saul was one of the judges, he must have been married at the time. Conybeare and Howson, *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, vol. i. p. 77, Note 6.

apology was in the main given him by Saul of Tarsus. No pen and ink, nor art of stenography, would be needed for that report: the intentness of Paul's mind, and his dreadful complicity in what followed, would write it on his memory as with an iron pen;—that single sheep of Christ pleading for his Master against the bloodthirsty wolves who were ready to devour him,—could the scene ever be forgotten while memory held her seat?

But, secondly, Saul will reproduce these arguments as a Christian preacher and writer. The former part of his sermon in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia is formed on the plan of Stephen's defence, being a rapid summary of the national history; and we may gather from that sermon how Stephen would have concluded his address, had time been allowed him. But, indeed, the whole of the Pauline theology finds its germs in this apology of Stephen's. Paul's assertion that faith was reckoned to Abraham when he was in uncircumcision is merely the unfolding of Stephen's historical statement that God, subsequently to the call and promise, gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. Paul was emphatically the Apostle of the Gentiles, maintaining their claim to God's favour and a place in His kingdom quite independently of the Law or the

Temple. And what Stephen's speech really goes to is the very same point—the gist of his argument being this, that there was a promise and a covenant before there was a Temple, before there was a Law, before there was even the rite of Circumcision. Ergo, the Divine promise and covenant made with mankind in Christ must stand clear of the Law, the Temple, and the legal Sacrament. It is the argument of the Epistle to the Galatians.

Let us conclude this Lecture by the reflection that, as St. Stephen was reproduced in St. Paul, when the latter became a Christian, so there is in the Church of Christ, even as we see it everywhere in the realm of Nature, a law of reproduction, in virtue of which faith, and zeal, and holy enterprise, are propagated to a remote posterity. Every earnest Christian kindled his taper of sacred enthusiasm from the light of some other Christian, just as in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Easter the light which is kindled on the Sepulchre is caught from one another by the tapers of the pilgrims. A good Christian's sermons, a good Christian's writings, above all a good Christian's life, are contagious for good. Persons listening to them, studying them, looking upon them, catch the sacred flame. Stephen,

though dead, lives, and speaks, and burns in Paul. And thus through a succession of human minds the light of Truth and Grace is handed on from generation to generation—that light which sat upon the heads of the Apostles in tongues of flame, and which Our Lord came to kindle upon earth. May we each of us catch, and give this proof of having caught it, that we communicate it to our neighbour!

## CHAPTER VI.

### ST. STEPHEN'S APOLOGY.—PART II.

“But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yestern day? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame

of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.—ACTS vii. 17—37.

It was remarked in our last Lecture that St. Stephen, in his apology, appears in three characters, as a defendant, pleading his own cause, as a controversialist, refuting and inveighing against his theological opponents, and as a preacher, setting forth Divine Truth. In our paraphrase of this section of his speech we shall still bring out these three elements of the argument, expanding as before those insinuations of Christian doctrine, which the orator could not convey more explicitly, lest he should be prematurely stopped.

*Apologetic:—*

“And now I descend to a later period of our

national history, in which another character, equally with Joseph rejected of men, and equally with Joseph exalted by God, comes before us. It has been industriously set about among the people that I have at various times uttered blasphemies against Moses. The accusation is a simple slander. I maintain, and have always maintained, that Moses was God's great instrument in fulfilling the promise made to Abraham respecting the deliverance of his seed from foreign bondage. He was born in one of those extremities, which are God's opportunities, when the family of Abraham, having now grown into a nation, were ground down under a different dynasty from that which had shown such favour to Joseph. The surpassing and almost divine beauty of the infant was an omen of his future greatness. This omen indeed was well nigh frustrated, for in infancy he was within a hair's breadth of destruction; but from a poor foundling, wailing feebly in an ark of bulrushes, he became the adopted son of a great princess, and was educated amidst the splendours and luxuries of a court. Not to speak of his possession of all the secular knowledge of the day, he was divinely endowed with gifts in which he was naturally deficient, moral suasion and the power

of influence and control over other minds. It might have been supposed that under the circumstances of his education, which had estranged him from his family, the remembrance of his kindred and his race would have been obliterated from his mind. Bred at court from his very babyhood, one might have thought that he would disown and ignore his connexion with a nation of serfs. But not so. His sympathies were Israelite, while his training was Egyptian ; and when he had reached a mature age, he sought out the dwellings of his degraded brethren, and casually seeing a wrong done to one of them by an Egyptian, he struck down the oppressor and avenged the oppressed. When the rumour got wind of this blow struck in their defence, the people did not kindle as he had expected ; the patriot spirit had been trodden out of their hearts by long years of oppression. The next step was to reconcile their intestine discords ; for unless they were united, they would never be strong. Bravery he had shown on their behalf at a great personal risk ; and he now wished to animate them with a spirit of brotherly sympathy, so necessary to an effective combination in their defence. But as they had not responded warmly to his assumed championship,

so they would have none of his peace-making. The quarrelling Israelites resented his arbitration as unauthorized, and even taunted him with his interference in favour of their countrymen on the previous day. Disgusted by the rejection of his sympathy, and fearing that the offer of it might offend the Egyptian king, he fled into an adjacent country, still a heathen one, where after the lapse of many years he received the Divine Revelation, from which dates the commencement of your Law. That which he had attempted formerly from the promptings of his own sanctified heart, he is now called to do by a direct commission from God. With you I entirely believe in that commission. From the burning yet unconsumed bush (type of his nation providentially supported in the furnace of affliction) the Angel of the Covenant, who represented God, and indeed who was God, spoke audibly to him ; announced the interest which He, in common with Moses, felt for the oppressed bond slaves ; and proposed to him to become their champion and deliverer. And champion and deliverer he proved, tearing them out of Pharaoh's clutch by exploits of a most marvellous character, and sustaining them during their pilgrimage in the wilderness by

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manifestations of Divine power equally marvellous."

*Controversial:—*

"So far you and I are entirely of accord, neither of us calling in question for an instant the surpassing dignity or the Divine legation of Moses. That so great a Prophet sprung from among us is of itself a distinction, which may well make us proud. But this feeling of pride is greatly qualified when we consider the reception Moses met with. If a divinely commissioned champion sprung from the forefathers of our race, it is painfully evident that our forefathers did not appreciate him. They showed the rudest ingratitude for his sympathy; and they positively rejected his arbitration. And there is another incident in this part of the story, which bears upon questions on which I am at issue with you. The history of Moses leads us to believe that other spots, aye, and spots in other lands, may be truly consecrated by the Divine Presence, no less than the Temple. You boast of your Shechinah, of the visible glory, which in these later days indeed has been removed, but which in the first Temple dwelt between the Cherubim. But did it never occur to you that there was a Shechinah in the land of Madian; that God manifested Himself

as visibly and as resplendently in the glowing thorn of the wilderness as He did over the mercy seat? Can our Temple, then, or our land have that exclusive and inalienable prerogative of sanctity which, in the narrowness of your minds, you claim for them? Is it really in conformity with your own Scriptures to call Gentile countries profane, or Gentiles common or unclean? I know that you decline all association with Gentiles as fraught with impurity and contaminating. But how does this sentiment derive support from the history of your great champion? Was not Moses by God's Providence associated with Gentiles from his youth upwards; born and bred among Gentiles? Did he take any taint from the learning of the Egyptians with which he was imbued in his earliest years? Was his grand career fulfilled, and his splendid miracles wrought, in Palestine? or did he never set foot in Palestine at all? You know that, though he was separate from the Egyptians in spirit and principles, he had none of that ceremonial shrinking from them which you manifest towards men of another nation, that he was familiar with their language and manners, and during one third part of his life was in daily intercourse with them."

*Didactic :—*

“ But I have another and more important application to make of the history of Moses. Events in human history often repeat themselves, and the shadows of the future are thrown upon the canvas of the past. I seem to see that this generation has witnessed a career, to which that of Moses bears a striking, and not fortuitous, resemblance. Three-and-thirty years ago an extraordinary infant was born at Bethlehem. He narrowly escaped in infancy the wrath of a king. Before His birth He had existed previously amid the glories of the Heavenly Court and the anthems of the Angels, far removed from the sins and sufferings of a fallen world. But as it came into Moses’ heart at the Egyptian court to visit his brethren, the children of Israel, so His tender sympathy with the fallen drew the Lord of Glory down to the earth. Like Moses, He was sheltered in Egypt. Like Moses, He grew in wisdom with a preternatural growth—a growth which surprised some of your sages, when they heard him at twelve years old questioning with the doctors in the Temple. Like Moses, He came to avenge and deliver the oppressed; and He showed that He did so by striking a blow everywhere at the Devil’s power, and de-

livering men from the thralldom of demoniacal possession, and from the still more galling thralldom of sin. Like Moses, too, He came to reconcile those who were at variance. The Angels chanted at His birth, 'Peace on Earth,' and His Gospel is the Gospel of peace and love. But, again, like Moses, when He came unto His own, His own received Him not. Though you had seen over and over again the credentials of His mission, ye dared to ask Him by what authority He did these things. Ye formally disowned Him before Pilate, and said that Cæsar was your king. And, formal disavowals apart, your whole demeanour towards Him since the beginning of His Ministry has been a refusal of His Mediation, and a contemptuous saying to Him in the ears of God, and angels, and men, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'"

We have not yet finished that section of the Apology which deals with the history of Moses. The portions of the speech devoted to the different periods of Jewish history are as follows:—Eighteen verses for the period between Abraham and Moses (about 216 years); twenty-five verses for the period of Moses' life (120 years); three verses for the period from Moses to Solomon

(about 701 years). It is clear from hence that the Mosaic period is that which Stephen laboured to bring out in the highest relief. And the reason is obvious. It suited the purpose of his argument to give a special prominence to this period. David is at least as interesting a character (perhaps more interesting, as being more intensely human) as Moses; but David is passed over with the barest mention; his distresses, his triumphs, his sins, are all ignored; and he is introduced only as "desiring to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob." All which shows that it is not the orator's design to give a regular summary of the Jewish history, but to select and emphasize those parts which make most for his own purpose. Bear in mind the charge he had to meet. It was a charge which represented him as derogating from the dignity of Moses, the value of the Law, and the sanctity of the Temple. Hence he is very full upon the history of Moses, and full also upon the history of those transactions of Grace which preceded Moses, and so stood clear of the Law; hence he abounds in allusions to places outside the Holy Land, where God manifested Himself; and hence he kindles into enthusiasm on the spirituality of worship, when he has reached the subject of

the Temple. The accusation turned upon Moses, the Law, and the Temple: the defence turns upon Moses, the Law, and the Temple. Thus every word which falls from Stephen's mouth is strictly *ad rem*, and meets the point at issue. Nor is it important to observe this, merely as furnishing an answer to the shallow criticisms on the Apology of St. Stephen, which I alluded to in my last Lecture. Another valuable lesson may be learned from the circumstance. It shows that when the Holy Spirit speaks in a man, as He did in Stephen, and as (before Stephen) He used to do in the impassioned rebukes and exhortations of the Prophets, He does not by any means free Himself from intellectual method, or from the ordinary conditions of argument. No address was ever fuller of Divine unction and fervour than this of Stephen's: in no speech did the orator ever glow with a diviner fire; yet in no speech, I do not hesitate to say, is the point which has to be proved kept more steadily and consistently in view throughout. There is one point of sight to which all the lines of the argument converge, and that point is the rebutting of the charge brought against him, and the exhibition of the true significance of the Law, the Ritual, and

the Temple. Now this remark may serve to reprove some popular errors.

(1) Inconsecutive and disjointed utterances thrown out at random are not to be mistaken for effusions of the Holy Spirit. It is true that the Apostles and primitive disciples were bidden by their Master to take no thought beforehand what they should say in their defence, and assured that He would furnish them with materials on the emergency. But it is equally true that, when they speak, their speech is argumentatively to the purpose: it is never wide of the mark, never discursive, never rambling. True it is that they are exceedingly simple, but then the simplicity consists in the absence of all ornament, not in the neglect of a suitable and convincing line of argument.—And this warning is needed as regards prayer no less than preaching. Some good people of these days, rightly discerning that devotion lies in the heart, and is an exercise of the heart, are for discarding from prayer altogether the action of the understanding. Not long ago I heard our Church Collects quarrelled with, because they are framed in logical method, an attribute of God (or a fact of sacred story) being recited as the basis of the petition; an appropriate petition

being made to rise upon this foundation; and then a devout aspiration of a similar character putting the crown upon the whole. It was alleged by the objector against this method that the only true form of devotion was ejaculation, excited either by the needs of the moment, or (in a more regular and stated way) by the contemplation of Our Lord's sufferings. Now this is the one-sidedness of the human mind, giving prominence to one great truth at the expense of another. There must be fervour in prayer, if it is to be prayer at all; but because there is fervour, there is no need that there should be a lack of intelligence. If there be no heart in a prayer, it is a dead prayer; but why should the action of the mind be supposed to interfere with and suppress the action of the heart? The tongues of the Primitive Church were an elevated devotional utterance, in which "the spirit prayed, but the understanding was unfruitful." But the Apostle, though he himself spoke largely with tongues, gives his deliberate preference to intelligent prayer,—“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” And there is a real ground for this combined action

of the heart and mind in prayer. We are to worship God with every part of our nature, not with its highest element alone. Every element of our nature has been assumed and sanctified by Christ. He assumed a human mind, and a human body, no less than a human spirit. And therefore as we may not say of the body "it shall have no share in my devotions," as we must carefully avoid all irreverent postures, and kneel or stand in prayer and praise, so the understanding should be exerted in the worship of God, though in subordination to the spirit, to such an extent at least as to make our service (what God requires the service of Christians to be) reasonable.

(2) Another great lesson suggested by the course of argument taken in the Apology is the wisdom of an appeal to primitive times. The line, which Stephen takes in reasoning with the Jews, is precisely the same line which St. Paul afterwards took when he wrote to the Galatians—"The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, *which was four hundred and thirty years after*, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." That is to say, "Primitive as the Law is, there is a Covenant of Grace yet more primi-

tive ; holy as the Temple is, there was a Dispensation long prior to the Temple, under which men found favour with God. Ergo, neither Law nor Temple can be indispensable, but faith only. Moses is venerable, but Abraham is more venerable still. Circumcision is a precious ordinance, but there was a relationship to God previously to circumcision, into which Abraham entered by faith. ' He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised ; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.' "

Now here we are reminded of the quaint but vigorous language of one who met an argument from the Christian Fathers with a counter-argument from the Holy Scripture. He is reported to have said, " I esteem the Fathers much ; but the Grandfathers I esteem still more." If, on the point in question, the Fathers were really at issue with the Holy Scriptures, there is great force and truth in the saying. The Psalmist, describing prophetically the triumphs of the Church in the primitive days, sings, " When the Almighty scattered

kings for her, then was she as white as snow in Salmon." And there is much truth in Pascal's celebrated remark, on the essential distinction between Theology and other sciences <sup>1</sup>, that the old age of other sciences is not the day of their birth, but the present day, when research has accumulated upon research, and errors have been exploded; and when, standing on the vantage-ground of the knowledge won by our ancestors, we, though not more intelligent, are able to see further than they; whereas the old age of Theology is its infancy, when its revelations were first made to the holy Apostles and Prophets, revelations which have never subsequently

<sup>1</sup> Où l'autorité a la principale force, c'est dans la théologie, parce qu'elle y est inséparable de la vérité, et que nous ne la connaissons que par elle : de sorte que, pour donner la certitude entière des matières les plus incompréhensibles à la raison, il suffit de les faire voir dans les livres sacrés ; comme pour montrer l'incertitude des choses les plus vraisemblables, il faut seulement faire voir qu'elles n'y sont pas comprises ; parce que les principes de la théologie sont au-dessus de la nature et de la raison, et que, l'esprit de l'homme étant trop faible pour y arriver par ses propres efforts, il ne peut parvenir à ces hautes intelligences, s'il n'y est porté par une force toute-puissante et surnaturelle.

Il n'en est pas de même des sujets qui tombent sous les sens ou sous le raisonnement. L'autorité y est inutile, la raison seule a lieu d'en connoître, &c.—*Pensées de Pascal*, partie 1<sup>ère</sup>. Art. 1<sup>er</sup>.

been added to. There are few persons who have not occasionally felt that if, on some moot point of controversy, they had the privilege of putting a question to St. Paul, St. Peter, or St. John, the point would be settled infallibly in a very few words. But instead of the presence of these inspired men, we have their writings; and these writings are of course our highest ultimate appeal, so that no doctrine, whatever authority it may derive from times later than theirs, can be allowed to stand for a moment, if it at all contravenes their teaching. If we are to have an appeal to antiquity (and in Theology such an appeal is most just), let us go to the highest antiquity which is accessible to us, the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. The Apostles, according to the promise of Jesus, were guided into all truth by the Spirit of Truth; nor can any one, whatever his advantages, know Theology so well as they. It is matter of every day's experience that stories, which pass through three or four mouths before they reach us, are distorted and disfigured; that, like the snow-ball rolled along the snow-clad ground, they gain fresh accretions at every yard which they travel over. If, therefore, we can manage to reach God's Revelations at their

starting-point, we shall see them, one would think, in their purest and truest form.

All this may be readily granted. And yet there are certain modifications of the maxim of the French moralist, which must in reason be made, and which detract somewhat from that neatness and terseness of the maxim which would recommend it so much to a French mind. It may not be useless to state these modifications very briefly.

(1) The Apostles expressed their minds on Theology in language; and the language they used is dead, or at least dead in those forms and idioms which the Apostles employed. Now a dead language may very possibly be better understood in modern times than it was some centuries ago, from the fact that the researches of scholarship have been further prosecuted. And for this reason a modern divine may have a greater advantage for the interpretation of Holy Scripture than one who lived nearer the source.

(2) In Bishop Butler's "Analogy" we have this pregnant sentence—"Possibly it might be intended that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture." It is clear that this

must be the case with all the prophetical parts. When the fulfilment of the prophecy arrives, it cannot but throw a flood of light upon the prophecy itself, so that those who live at the period of the fulfilment must have a further insight into the subject than those who lived at the period of the prediction. Thus, *e.g.*, our Lord's words to St. Peter, in which He calls him the Rock-man, on which the Church should be built, and entrusts him with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, must have sorely perplexed the Apostles, until they had witnessed the effects of St. Peter's ministry on the day of Pentecost, and in the house of Cornelius, and had seen him using the keys of the Word and Sacraments to open the Church (or Kingdom of Heaven), first to the Jews, and afterwards to the Gentiles. Then the prophecy would be cleared up.

Again, history, or in other words the experience of mankind, may, of course, throw great light upon the Divine laws which govern the Church. For example, those who lived in the Apostles' times (and probably, from some passages in their writings, the Apostles themselves) seem to have been under the impression that the career of the Christian Church would

be very brief and very brilliant : they thought of the disciples of Christ as always fervent in zeal and love, and ardent in hope of the Second Advent ; and they supposed that Our Lord would respond to this ardour by descending from Heaven speedily to terminate the dispensation, and take His own people to Himself. We know better, not because we are more spiritual or enlightened, but simply because we live later than they. We can trace (as they could not) a great and most interesting analogy between the Jewish and the Christian Churches ; both having undergone, in the course of centuries, woeful declensions from the Divine Idea, as exhibited to Moses in the one case, and to the Apostles in the other, and both moreover having passed through great schisms which have utterly disjointed them, and shattered their original unity. And thus we have a more lively conception of the truth conveyed by the Parable of the Tares, than Christians of the Apostolic age could have had, inasmuch as we have seen in full blossom those tares of heresy, division, and sin, which they only saw in germ.

3. Finally, we have on several recent occasions observed that the truths of Holy Scripture are seeds, according to that profound saying

of Christ, "The seed is the Word of God." Now, in the order of nature, a seed takes a long time in germinating: it lies dormant in the soil for a while, and, even after it has burst, arrives at its maturity very gradually. So with the revelations of God's Word. They were lodged in the human mind by Our Lord and His Apostles; but the human mind did not apprehend at once their full significance. The consciousness of the Church was to waken gradually to the several Articles of Faith, by means of contradictions, heresies, battles with Judaism, battles with Paganism, and the action of many pious minds brought to bear upon these truths, turning them over on all sides, and viewing them in several aspects. Hence we have in the Creeds a systematic Theology, a number of deductions made by the human mind from the original Revelation, which constitute the essential Faith of the Church. And every man who brings to the study of God's Revelations a devout, humble, and intelligent mind, more especially if he is aided by the appliances of sacred learning, cannot fail occasionally, though his lucubrations have no authority as dogmas, to view the old truths under new aspects, and to find in the well-worn words of Scripture

some fresh and beautiful meaning. And in this sense Theology is *not* stationary, but progresses hand in hand with human thought and human experience.

We ought to be deeply thankful for such progress. We ought to believe that out of all the heresies and contradictions of modern times, threatening, as they seem to do, the very vitals of the Faith, something will accrue in the order of God's Providence to the stock of Theological Science which is the sacred trust of the Church; that the Truth will receive new illustrations; that the Holy Scriptures will be in the end more devoutly, as well as more intelligently, appreciated by the faithful. Objections from sceptics lead to examination by believers; and examination, conducted with reverence and prayer, cannot possibly result otherwise than in the more perfect elucidation and establishment of the Truth. Yet while there is no need to disparage the illustrations which God's Word may receive from human experience, learning, and thought, there is in the Word itself a freshness and heavenly savour, which gives it a relish to the spiritual mind, such as not the most learned expositions of it can lay claim to. In the Scriptures is the breath of God's Spirit,

pure, fresh, invigorating as the breath of Heaven. This pure air has been breathed with delight and refreshment by many a devout soul, and exhaled by them again in pious writings and reflections. But air which has been inhaled always loses some of its vigour and healthfulness. We are more refreshed by the pure air, which has not been consumed in its passage through the lungs. Of no work of piety, save only of God's Holy Word, can it be said that it has no taint of earth in it. And the less taint of earthliness there is in *us*, in our hearts, hopes, affections, the more shall we prize and love this fresh breath of Inspiration—pure and uncontaminated as the morning air, which dances forth to salute the sunrise.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE APOLOGY.—PART III.

“This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your God Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; who found favour before God, and desired

to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."—ACTS vii. 37—55.

"Who would not accuse Stephen," says the devout Quesnel, "of imprudence and bitterness, of having irritated his enemies, instead of dexterously managing them for their salvation, and of having given occasion for the persecution of the Church, had not God Himself justified him by crowning him with martyrdom, and bestowing on him the first-fruits and the primacy of this special grace?"

The vehement burst of indignation which terminated so abruptly the apology and the life of St. Stephen, is indeed, in several aspects, an observable circumstance. One point shall be remarked before we approach the nearer consideration of it. Observe, then, that this was not

the first Christian sermon which the Jews had heard, nor which the assembled Sanhedrim had heard. Otherwise, possibly, such vehement and unsparing denunciations had been somewhat out of place. St. Peter had addressed the assembled people in explanation of the miracle of Pentecost, and again in explanation of the miracle wrought on the cripple at the Beautiful Gate. On the morrow after that miracle, Peter and John had been placed before the Council, the high-priests Annas and Caiaphas with the chief members of the high-priestly family being present. Then and there Peter had briefly but boldly testified of Jesus as "the stone which was set at nought by you builders," and as "the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." This testimony called down threats from the Council which, so far from intimidating the Apostles, drew from them a meek but firm defiance. Soon after they were again apprehended and brought before the Council, and had another opportunity of testifying briefly and boldly to the crucified and risen Saviour. The irritation of the members of the Council on that occasion is expressed by the same word which is here employed—"they were cut to the heart."

And as it is added, "they took counsel to slay the.n," it would seem that the Apostles were saved from Stephen's fate only by the advice of Gamaliel. In consequence of that advice, no further steps were taken than to scourge them in the synagogue; of which disgrace, as suffered for their Master's Name, they were very proud. Now in order to form an estimate of the tone of St. Stephen's Apology, it is necessary to take into account these previous Apostolic testimonies. Stephen's address is to a body of men who had already heard of Christ from the lips of His inspired and accredited messengers, and who had been so little impressed by the hearing, that they had at first threatened the messengers and then whipped them. Granted that the holy martyr's language is vehement, and even fiery, it was not uttered before the ecclesiastical rulers had shown a determined *animus* to put their foot relentlessly upon the spark of the Gospel, and tread it out wherever it appeared. It was to a council who had resisted Grace, who were resisting it while he spoke, that Stephen addressed himself.

Another point is worthy of remark in this connexion. Stephen was addressing the Sanhedrim (that is, the ecclesiastical government

of the nation), and the tone of even St. Peter towards this body had been very different indeed from his tone with the people. How mild, how indulgent is that expostulation of his, addressed to the crowd which collected in Solomon's porch after the miracle at the Beautiful Gate!—"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." With the rulers of the people and elders of Israel, on the other hand, he is short and stern, making no such allowance for them: "This is the stone which was set at nought of *you builders*," says he. And again, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, *whom ye slew and hanged on a tree*." There was deep reason and equity in this difference of tone. It was the ecclesiastical government which had all along excited and fomented the hostility of the people to Christ. "The common people," we are told, "heard him gladly;" on one occasion would have taken Him by force to make Him a king; on another, escorted Him in triumph to the city, shouting Hosanna and spreading their garments in His way; and in

the closing scene, it was only at the persuasion of *the chief priests and elders* that they were induced to “ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus.” They had, no doubt, their full share of guilt in yielding to these accursed instigations, and accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter charges them with the Crucifixion as having been accomplices in it; but, as on the occasion of the Fall, God recognized a difference in degree of guilt between man and the serpent—a difference which rendered man’s case remediable—so those who are of the same mind with God draw a distinction between the seducer and the seduced, between him who sins through weakness, and him who sins of malice prepense. It is upon those who had sinned of malice prepense against his Master, and showed their determination to continue in such sin, that the blessed Martyr hurls his indignant invective; and this accounts, to a great degree, for the severity of it.

We shall presently recur to this invective. Let us now continue our paraphrase of the speech, upon the framework already traced out; separating its apologetic, didactic, and controversial elements.

*Apologetic :—*

“I admit, as I have already said, the surpass-

ing dignity of Moses. He it was who mediated between the Jehovah Angel and our fathers in the wilderness,—the chosen one, who stood before Him oftentimes in the gap, to turn away His wrathful indignation, lest He should destroy them. He it was who received and transmitted to you the Oracles of God ; living Oracles, I grant, whose natural force, like that of the lawgiver, is nothing abated by their extreme antiquity. You see that I by no means undervalue your Law. To add to its dignity and solemnity, the Angels assisted at the giving of it, and communicated its arrangements to Moses, as he in his turn communicated them to the people. That it proceeded ultimately from God ; that Angels were the supernatural, Moses the human agent who negotiated it with you ; that he and all the Prophets whom God has since raised up to you, spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,—all this I stedfastly believe ; and believing thus much, can I be the heretic, which this charge represents me to be?—Moses it was who saw in the mount, while holding high converse with God, an exact pattern of your Sanctuary—a pattern expressed upon earth, as far as materials of wood, and metal, and linen could express it, first

by the Tabernacle, and subsequently by the Temple."

*Didactic :—*

"But you should remember that Moses suffered not his people to rest in himself. He distinctly intimated that his ministry was not final, in fact was to be superseded by another and a greater. He spoke of a future Prophet, like himself, to whom he referred the people with a 'him shall ye hear'—a significant intimation that his own instructions should cease, when this Prophet had been found; that this Prophet was the end of the Law for righteousness. And all the Prophets in grand chorus have chimed in with this testimony of Moses. They have all foreshown, without a single exception, a just One; have pointed on into the far distance to One who should satisfy every claim of God and man, and fulfil all righteousness."

*Controversial :—*

"But this testimony you reject, as in their days your fathers rejected the bearers of it. Indeed, your national history is only one long record of the sins of your ancestors against Light and Grace. When Moses was in the mount, transacting with God on their behalf, Israel apostatized from him, even as

now, when Our Lord is in Heaven, interceding for you, you are sending messages of defiance after Him, and declining His rule. Jealous for the honour of your Temple indeed ! Very little jealousy did your fathers show for God's house of prayer in the days of old, or for His ordinance of worship. In the very lifetime of their Lawgiver, they led up a sacrifice in solemn procession to the golden calf which Aaron had made. As if in mimicry of the sacred tabernacle, which journeyed in the midst of them, they raised aloft and carried in state the shrine of Moloch, and the star of Remphan, emblemizing the heavenly host, to which in lieu of God they paid their homage. Amos, no member of the prophetic schools, but a herdsman and gatherer of sycomore-fruit, whom the Lord raised up to speak His word, reproved them for this with a trenchant irony. And the prophet Isaiah reproved them not only for the gross corruptions, but also for the unspirituality, of their worship. You should lay his words to heart. When, speaking in the Name of the Lord, he says, ' Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool ; what house will ye build Me, saith the Lord : or what is the place of My rest ? ' does he not condemn that narrow and superstitious estimate of the building, which confines all acceptable

worship to that sacred precinct? You will not refuse to acknowledge Isaiah as a prophet. Is he on your side or on mine in this controversy respecting the Temple? Why, Isaiah echoes with peculiar emphasis the very question which Solomon himself asked in the dedication of the Temple—‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded.’”

But at this period of the address something made the mind of the orator move with greater impetus, and struck off from his tongue those shackles of caution which had hitherto restrained it. It is not hard to see what that something was. First, there was the natural friction which his own argument produced in his mind. As he traced the history of his nation, view after view opened upon him of the perversity, the narrow bigotry, the wilful opposition to truth, which had characterized them at every period. They had been only too consistent all along in their miserable course of rejecting Divine messengers; and now by their rejection of the Son of God, and of the Spirit of God, who had spoken to them in the Apostles, they had put the finishing stroke upon their sin, and had filled up the

measure of their iniquity. This repeated defiance of God on their part stirs him, galls him, chafes him, and kindles in him a holy indignation against the stiff-necked, ceremonious hypocrites in the midst of whom he was standing. And in all probability his quotation from Isaiah, so palpably adverse to their view of the Temple, and at the same time so impossible to be answered as drawn from an acknowledged prophet, stung them to the quick. This is indicated in the account of their demeanour which St. Luke subjoins: "When they heard these things" (but the translation is slightly inaccurate here; it should rather be, "They, while hearing these things"—while in the act of listening to him) "were cut to the heart, and they gnashed" (were constantly gnashing, or, as we should say, "kept gnashing") "upon him with their teeth." It is not difficult to picture the scene. Audible murmurs of dissatisfaction are heard as Stephen says out boldly that "God, being a Spirit, dwelleth not in temples made with hands," and clenches his argument with a quotation from Isaiah. They make menacing gestures, and glance at him fiercely, as wild beasts who would spring upon their prey. Those two scribes, reaching across to one another, have got a scroll between them, in

which they are pointing to passages which they think confute him. One finger is on the words—"I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put My Name there for ever ; and Mine eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually : " the fist of the other hand contracts, and is raised towards the prisoner. The young man from the Cilician synagogue glances to and fro from the accused to Gamaliel, and from Gamaliel to the accused. That great doctor of the law had in a previous council made a diversion in favour of the Apostles. But on that occasion it appears that the high priest had been under the influence of the sect of the Sadducees ; and that Gamaliel, a strict Pharisee, should moderate the indignation of the council, when the point maintained by the Apostles was Our Lord's Resurrection from the dead, was to be expected, however little sympathy he might have with Christianity in other aspects of it. Stephen's speech brought out into full prominence not the anti-Sadducaic element (be it remembered he was not an Apostle, whose office was to be a witness of the Resurrection), but the anti-Pharisaic element of the Gospel. And as he did so, the eyes of Saul are turned wistfully towards his great authority, Gamaliel. Those eyes ask—"Do you hear his

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audacious words against the Temple and the holy seed of Abraham? What have you to say for him now? Will you plead for these Nazarenes once again, as you did at the last council?" And Gamaliel's contracted brow, and the shadow which has fallen on his face, answer that he has given up the patronage of Nazarenes, and will not be any longer their apologist.

There is evidently a storm of animosity brewing against Stephen in the hearts of his hearers. He catches the symptoms of it with that quick apprehension of the feelings of an audience which always characterizes an earnest speaker. And seeing in them for a moment the wicked husbandmen who had stoned one of God's messengers, and had slain another, and beaten another, and at length had risen up against and slaughtered His Son, he bursts forth upon them after the following manner:—

"These murmurs, these menaces, this impatience of truth which you are now manifesting, show that you are cast in the same type of character as your fathers. Your national history is consistent throughout; it has been, it is now, one of resistance to Grace. Those who by God's commission showed Christ's coming beforehand your fathers slew one after another. It has

been reserved for you to put the crown upon their guilt, and to prove yourselves their true descendants, and the inheritors of their principles, by slaying the Son of God Himself. O highly favoured but unfaithful race; Israelites by blood, but not Israelites indeed; Jews outwardly in the flesh, but not inwardly in the spirit, how vain your boast of having received the law through the ministry of Angels, seeing ye violate every principle of its holy requirements!"

Thus the words of the Psalmist seem to represent the process of St. Stephen's mind in his apology. In the early part of his speech he is cautious, and avoids giving offence; "he keeps his mouth, as it were, with a bridle, while the ungodly is in his sight." But at last his heart grows hot within him, and while he is musing upon the circumstances he has recited, the fire kindles; and at the last he throws away his caution, and speaks in accents of burning indignation.

We have seen in a previous Lecture how this servant of Christ was conformed to his Master. Here is another and most striking instance of that conformity. The public Ministry of Our Blessed Lord ended with a burst of indignation

against the Scribes and Pharisees, in which are found all the topics which appear in the close of St. Stephen's address, only expressed with an even greater vehemence. The disciple's protest is strong; but when we compare it with the Master's, it is as the light of the moon compared with that of the sun—a weaker reproduction of the same sentiment. The last public words which Our Lord spake at His solemn final exit from the Temple, (for the great Prophecy on the Mount which follows was delivered privately to the circle of His disciples,) were these; and be it remembered, that just as Stephen's final invective determined his fate, so immediately after these words of Our Lord was held the council which came to the resolution of destroying Him; "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." Now this resemblance of Our Lord's language to St. Stephen's at once throws light upon St. Stephen's language, and enables us to draw the right lesson from it. Is it possible to denounce men as serpents and a generation of vipers, and yet to have a heart of love towards them? It is quite possible; else we should not find such words in Our Lord's mouth, who is the Incarnate Love. Nay, it is possible for these two things, love and vehement righteous indignation, to co-exist even in our sinful and corrupt nature, That they did co-exist in St. Stephen, who was a man of like passions with ourselves, is clear from the sequel, in which he prays for his murderers. Shall we then say, by way of explaining to ourselves the apparent inconsistency, that

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the words in such cases are only words; that there is no sentiment corresponding to them in the heart of him who utters them? Surely not. God forbid that we should suppose the words of Our Blessed Lord and of His saints to be other than a true reflex of their sentiments! Such an hypothesis is by no means necessary to solve the difficulty which these facts present. Our Blessed Lord's human spirit was stirred within him, St. Stephen's spirit was stirred within him, by the remembrance and by the present evidences of Jewish perversity. They felt and they expressed a righteous indignation against stubborn opposition to God's Truth. Be it remarked that it was a righteous indignation, fastening in both cases upon the moral character of the opponents, not upon personal affronts received from them. And this remark leads us to Bishop Butler's theory of the original constitution of our nature, and to the place which anger held in it; a theory not only true philosophically, but serving to explain much in Holy Scripture, which without the theory would be incapable of explanation. According to this theory, then, none of the great original affections of our nature are in themselves sinful; they become sinful only when indulged in excess; or

when, by being harboured and cherished too much, they assume a morbid shape ; or when they are allowed to usurp the place of the conscience and to govern the will ; or, finally, when they are fastened upon wrong objects. This is the case with anger, one of those sentiments of the heart, whose moral rectitude might be altogether questioned. In the natural man it fastens upon personal affronts as its most congenial object ; it is kept in the chamber of the heart, until it sours and corrupts ; and alas ! it often hurries away the will into an act of spitefulness and revenge. But supposing that it fastened upon moral wrong ; that it was never indulged to excess ; that it never destroyed the most perfect self-control, (and this was the shape in which Our Blessed Lord, and He only of all mankind, consistently exhibited it,) there would then be no sin in anger ; rather anger, in this form of it, is an element of a perfect character, and indeed the other side of Love. I speak advisedly in calling it the other side of Love. In God there is (to speak with entire accuracy) only one perfection ; and that perfection is Love. His Truth is Love ; His Holiness is Love ; His Justice is Love ; and His Anger is Love. The narrowness and limitation of our minds makes it necessary

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for us to think of these attributes separately; but in truth they have a common ground and meeting point in God's Love, just as heat, and light, and all the colours find their focus in the sun. Love, in its aspect towards misery, is compassion. Towards a moral fall brought about by weakness, by surprise, by strength of temptation, Love maintains still the same aspect,—compassion. But towards wrong perversely done, wilful opposition to the Truth, stubborn defiance of Divine warnings, what aspect must Love necessarily assume? It must become anger. God's Love makes Him long to win and save souls. Now if this disposition on the part of God meet (in the mystery of man's free will) with a determination on the part of man to oppose God's way of salvation, and to discourage, as far as possible, those who wish to avail themselves of that way, (and nothing less than this was the sin of the scribes and Pharisees,) the Love of God, finding this opposition to its counsels of mercy, becomes wrath, as a brimming river, which hastens to the sea, frets and chafes itself against a dyke. Now the mind of God dwells in Christ; and the mind of Christ, by the Holy Ghost, dwells in Christ's disciples.

But to descend to the consideration of our own rule of life as sinful men. It is observable that the New Testament precept on the subject of anger is, in so many words, a restraint, and not a prohibition: "Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Anger in itself is no sin; but it has a tendency to become so rapidly, if it be harboured too long. Like the manna, it corrupts and breeds worms, if kept over night in the close chamber of the heart. Then it will appear in the morbid shapes of spite, malice, revenge. The Christian rule is to throw it all away before the fermentation commences.

What has been said may read us a most useful lesson on the subject of spurious charity, a lesson much needed in these times. Charity is not uniform suavity under all circumstances; it has in it a stern element of moral indignation, which indeed is the salt that preserves it from corruption. Charity is the love of souls; and as being the love of souls, it is necessarily at issue with every thing which endangers souls, or which is plainly mischievous to them. Charity never flatters or soothes a man in wilful sin, but tells him plainly he shall die, if he holds by it; just as a surgeon, who desires nothing but

the health of his patient, does not hesitate to perform a painful operation. And because heresy, no less than sin, is mischievous to souls, charity pays no compliments to heresy, and will have no fellowship with heretics; its voice is, "If there come any unto you, and bring not the doctrine (of Christ), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds;" and its way of action is that of St. John, who fled out of the bath when he heard that Cerinthus was there, "lest," said he, "the roof should fall in upon so great a heretic, and I be involved in the same ruin." I cannot truly love either God or man, if I can stand by with a creamy smoothness of face, and see souls seduced into sin or entangled in vital error. And if some safeguards be required for the perfect righteousness of indignation under such circumstances, perhaps these may suffice:—

1. Rid the mind as much as possible of all resentment on the ground of personal affront or slight.

2. If it be error which rouses your indignation, make sure that it is *vital* error, and do not confound the Truth with your own view of it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RAPTURE OF ST. STEPHEN.

“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”—Acts vii. 55, 56.

IN his Second Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul distinguishes two kinds of rapture. He tells us that on one occasion he was caught away as far as the third heaven, on another caught away into Paradise. And in each case he adds that he could not tell whether in this ecstasy his spirit left the body, or whether his body itself was for the time translated (like that of Enoch and Elijah) into another sphere of existence,—“whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth.” Having the narrative before us of St. Stephen’s rapture, we are able to tell that it was out of the body. The person of the martyr still stood before the Council in one of the courts of the

earthly Temple. The high priest and his infuriated assessors lost not sight of him for a moment; but his spirit passed into a region where they could not follow him. It was carried up into the heavenly sanctuary, where the holy Angels do their homage, and wait on God's behests, and enjoyed a vision of the great High Priest, acting as our Advocate with the Father.

The particular form of this remarkable vision was adjusted (as indeed all God's Revelations are) to the associations and circumstances of the person to whom it was vouchsafed. Divine manifestations are always significant to those to whom they are made, fasten upon something in their fortunes or thoughts, gather round some nucleus in their minds. To Joshua, when about to undertake the siege of Jericho, the angel of the Lord appears as a captain girded for war; to the wise men of the East, whose study was astronomy, the revelation of our Lord's Birth is made by a star; to St. Peter and his partners in the fishing trade a sign of Christ's Divine Power is given by a miraculous draught of fishes. We find in St. Stephen's vision something analogous. Though a Hellenist, he was a Jew by religion, familiar with

the Jewish Ritual. The scene of his trial was probably a court of the Temple; and the trial took place before the high priest. Now every Jew was familiar with the history of the Shechinah, that blaze of glory enveloped in a cloud, which under the first Temple had been visible over the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and which at Solomon's dedication of the house had shone forth with such extraordinary brilliancy that we are told that "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." Every Jew, moreover, was familiar with the functions of the high priest on the great day of Atonement, in executing which he passed with a fuming censer, and with the blood of the sin-offering, through the veil or curtain which separated the holy of holies from the holy place, and there stood in the immediate presence-chamber of God. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains to us the beautiful symbolism of these Divine Ordinances, teaching us that the holy of holies is a figure of the highest heaven; that the veil is a figure of the human nature of Christ, which was rent asunder by death; that the passage of the high priest into the inmost sanctuary is a figure of Our Lord's

passage into Heaven, through and after the rending of His humanity by death; that the blood is typical of His Atonement, which He pleads for us on high.

Now, with all this Temple-imagery in his mind, and with the interpretation of it supplied to him by the Holy Spirit, of which he was full, Stephen sees the Shechinah in the heavenly sanctuary, and sees also the High Priest standing before God to intercede for the human race, of which, as the Son of Man, He is the Head and Representative.

But again; the mind of the holy martyr was full of his Master's words, and specially of those words which had been spoken by the Lord in circumstances similar to his own. When adjured by the high priest to say explicitly whether or not He was the Christ, the Son of God, Our Lord had replied in these accents of solemn warning, which His followers had laid to heart, and which doubtless had been reported to Stephen: "Thou hast said;" (an affirmation that He *was* the Son of God,) "nevertheless, I say unto you," (let not My present appearance as a criminal at your bar throw discredit on My words;—My present humiliation notwithstanding,) "hereafter shall ye see

the Son of Man" (surrounded by very different circumstantials) "sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Thus did Our Lord connect Himself with the remarkable prophecy of Daniel, and assert that in Him it should find its fulfilment: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him."—Now, when Stephen announces to this same Council, not long after, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God," it is as if he had said; "Lo, His words are fulfilled, which so recently He spake in your hearing. What Daniel saw in a vision, I now see actually accomplished. I see your late Victim, whom ye spat upon with contempt, and delivered Him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him, crowned with glory and honour, and at the right hand of God."

Thus we seem to have made out two aspects of this vision of St. Stephen's. It was a ravishing glimpse into the heavenly realities, of

which the Temple Service and the Jewish Ritual were but a shadow. And it was a confession of Christ before those who had crucified Him, in the very face of their prejudices. But, finally, it was a consolation and support to the first martyr himself, under the ordeal of martyrdom then imminent. Upon this aspect of it we must now say a few words.

We have already referred to the passage in which Our Lord had warned the Jews that they should see Him *sitting* on the right hand of power. Stephen sees Him, and testifies that he sees Him, *standing*. The difference of posture is most significant. The *Jews* were to see Christ *seated* on the right hand of power, because they were to see Him as their Judge; and the judge sits on the judgment-seat, the criminal standing before him. But His faithful disciple and witness sees Him *standing*, "as ready to assist him, as ready to plead for him, as ready to receive him." These last words are Bishop Pearson's terse commentary on the appearance of Our Lord to St. Stephen, and they will bear expansion. "As ready to *assist him*." The peculiar form the vision took was to encourage and console the disciple. Usually Our Lord is pictured as enthroned on the right hand of God.

But to Stephen, about to face death, and urgently in need of Divine support, this posture would not have been significant of sympathy and succour. A person who sits still while contemplating the sufferings of another, gives an impression of being indifferent to those sufferings, of being not unwilling that they should take their course. One who rises up and advances towards us, shows that he hears our cry and sympathizes with our trouble.—“As ready to *plead for him.*” There was an affecting contrast, made visible to the disciple, between things earthly and things heavenly. The earthly high priest sat before him as a judge, fury painted on his countenance, and condemned him. The heavenly High Priest, though indeed our appointed Judge, before whose judgment-seat we must all be made manifest, yet here appears in the more comfortable character as an Advocate before God the Judge of all—the character which the beloved disciple exhibits when he says, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Stephen was a sinner; and in proportion to the fulness of Grace within him would be his susceptibility to his sins. How deeply consolatory that his Master should appear to him in his

last moments, not in the aspect of Judge but of Pleader, one in whose hands his cause as a sinner might be safely reposed, one who answers all pleas against His beloved ones by exhibiting the wounds in His hands, and feet, and side.—“As ready to receive him.” Our Lord had bequeathed to His disciples this consolatory assurance, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Fulfilling these words to the eye of His first martyr, He appears as rising from His Throne to welcome and embrace him, as advancing towards him with open arms, and saying; “Come, for all things are now ready.” A visible assistance, and a visible advocacy, and a visible welcome, what could the first martyr need more to support him under his imminent trial?

We have had already frequent occasions to remark how the disciple on this occasion is treading in the steps of his Master, how both in the progress of circumstances he is conformed, and also intentionally conforms himself, to the image of Christ. This consolatory vision brings before us another feature of this remarkable conformity. Before Our Lord was driven into the

wilderness, to grapple with and defeat the tempter, "the heavens," we are told, "were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him." And again, in the period of His extremest need, in the garden of agony, "there appeared unto Him," we are told, "an angel from heaven, strengthening Him." In both cases Our Blessed Lord's human nature received an accession of strength from a heavenly vision; and in both cases it was in a moment when there was urgent need of such support. His human soul, which was subjected for our sakes to all the laws and all the limitations of humanity, and which always refused to fall back for succour upon the powers of His Divinity, might probably have succumbed, without this support, under the stress of the Forty Days' Temptation and the Passion—succumbed, I mean, not morally, so as to fall into sin, but by exhaustion of the natural powers. Now that the disciple might be made like unto the Lord in all things, it pleased God, in the first instance of martyrdom, to vouchsafe to the martyr the support of a heavenly vision. The first soul which was called to encounter death for Christ's sake needed, doubtless, this extraordinary succour. Stephen

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was about to tread a path which had never been trodden before; although many had incurred loss of character and worldly goods, life had not yet been sacrificed on the faith of the promises of Jesus. It was otherwise with St. James, the brother of St. John, and one of three favoured disciples, who witnessed the Transfiguration and the Agony. His martyrdom, which is cursorily noticed in chapter xii., was not attended with any vision; his faith doubtless pierced through the veil of matter which screens the spiritual world; but there is no reason to think that his bodily eye did so. And if any one should be disposed to wonder at this, St. James being an Apostle and very highly favoured, let it be remembered that what had passed in St. Stephen's case must have acted as the strongest possible support to the faith of St. James. The rapture of St. Stephen, and the words of ecstasy in which he described it, words which must have been bruited abroad among the whole Christian community, must have made St. James more than willing to follow him. The Apostle would naturally fortify himself (as probably every succeeding martyr in the noble army has done) by the Deacon's experience. He would reason with himself in Herod's prison;

“Stephen saw the Master ready to welcome him with open arms, as soon as the stones had done their cruel work upon his bruised body. Can I doubt that He is equally ready to welcome me, me to whom He foretold that I should drink the cup He Himself drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with? No sooner will the sword of the executioner have flashed down upon my neck, than the greetings of Him, and of my fellow-servant Stephen, will break upon my ear.”

What has been just remarked on the different circumstances of the martyrdoms of St. Stephen and St. James opens to us in an interesting manner the general plan of God’s present administration of His Church. “We walk by faith,” says the Apostle, “not by sight;” and it is God’s purpose to discipline us into this walk of faith. It would conflict with this purpose to make the realities of the spiritual world an object of sight to every believer; or, which would amount to very much the same thing, to give to the disciples of Christ in every generation a series of miraculous attestations of the truth of their religion. If God should vouchsafe to each believer such a vision as He vouchsafed to St. Stephen, or if Christ should

say to each one of us audibly (or in such a manner that there could be no doubt of its being His voice) what He said to St. Paul when seeking deliverance from the thorn in the flesh, there would be no longer any trial of character in faith, and the great object of our probation would be seriously interfered with. His plan therefore is to give glimpses into the spiritual world only at the outset of a Dispensation, to stigmatize particular crimes, on the first instance of their occurrence, by miraculous punishments, and to crown great spiritual exploits at their first performance with miraculous marks of favour; and then, having caused these things to be put on record, to leave the record of them to speak for itself to after ages, and to support the faith and hope of future generations. The Apostles frequently saw their risen Master. St. Stephen, St. Paul, and St. John enjoyed glimpses of His glory after the Resurrection. Since those days the heavens have closed upon Him, to open no more until they roll back their golden gates, to send Him forth upon His second Advent; and accordingly His disciples can no more see Him with the eye of sense. But it is to be remembered, that if our privileges are less high in this respect than those of our first fathers in the

faith, the opportunity of exercising a nobler faith, and one which God will reward more amply, is offered to us. "Blessed are they who have *not* seen," said Our Lord to St. Thomas, "and yet have believed." And St. Peter, implicitly commending the faith of those to whom he writes, as not having any aids of sense to lean upon, such as his own faith and that of his colleagues had been supported by, says, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." If when beset on all sides by difficulties and obstacles, we can realize Christ as standing on God's right hand, to succour us, to plead for us, and ere long to welcome us, our faith will be more highly approved than if it pleased God to open the heavens to us, and give us assurance of this great truth by our bodily senses.

The full consideration of our subject requires that we should make some remarks on the obtuseness of Stephen's auditors to the great and animating spectacle which he was privileged to see. Had the veil which screens the spiritual world been made as transparent to them as it was to him, they would either have been over-

whelmed with shame, and fled from the council chamber in dismay, or in an agony of remorse would have thrown themselves at his feet, and implored pardon for the wrong which they thought to do him. But they are blinded by malicious fury, and can no more see the Lord, than the prophet Balaam, when bent on his self-willed errand, could see the angel who went forth to withstand him. Now in this circumstance there is something very awful. A transaction was going on in the spiritual world which intimately concerned them—indeed, to which their malignity had given rise—and yet of which they were totally unconscious. The Lord had risen up to succour and welcome him, whom they had determined to sweep from the face of the earth; and thus they were defying God, and drawing down upon their heads an aggravated condemnation. It is a solemn thought for all of us, that transactions may continually pass in the spiritual world respecting ourselves, of which our senses give us no notice. Our Lord may be pleading for us that our span of life may be prolonged, and additional opportunities given us, while we are thinking of nothing less. Angels may be charged with ministries on our behalf, to deliver us from some imminent danger, or to

counterplot some of the designs of the Evil One, or to make some providential arrangement of our affairs; and some great blessing which we enjoy may be due under God to this agency; and yet we may apprehend nothing beyond the ordinary course of Nature or of Providence. The present state of the soul, immured in the body, has been compared by a good writer to the state of a bird in the egg. There is a world all around the bird of stir and movement, of light and colour, of form and sound, of ceaseless activities, both mental and physical; but a slight shell, as yet unbroken, effectually shuts out the little prisoner from all communion with this world. Our gross animal bodies resemble that slight shell. The world of spirits is vastly more full of action and intelligence, as well as vastly more beautiful, than the world we apprehend with our senses. It is close upon us, too, and encompasses us on all sides; but for the present, near as it is, so that we are in the very centre and heart of it, it is to us as if it were not. There is but one thing which can make this spiritual world a reality to us; and that is the faculty which penetrates into the unseen—Faith. God grant us that holy susceptibility to the unseen—or, in other words, that faith—which

comes of being filled with the Holy Ghost ; so that in every movement of Nature and Providence which concerns us, in every additional day of life, in every warning we receive, in every blessing and every relief which is allowed us, in every alteration of our circumstances, we may recognize His hand and care, and hear His voice.

We may remark finally, that the exclamation of St. Stephen at the moment of his rapture is a Confession of Faith. Few and brief as they are, his words are a Creed, expressing that fundamental article of the Christian religion, for which he was about to lay down his life ; “ Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.”

Here, first of all, is the humanity of Our Blessed Lord, and the relationship which He bears to all of us in virtue of His having taken our nature in its earliest germ and rudiment, “ before it received any personal configuration ;” for He is called *Son of Man* ; and not *a*, but *the* Son of Man. His Divinity is no less certainly implied in the words ; for He is said to stand on the right hand of God—a position of honour to which not even the highest mere creature can aspire ; for the writer of the Epistle

to the Hebrews pointedly excludes the Angels from such dignity; "*To which of the Angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?*" The atoning sufferings of Our Lord are also implied; for the Son of Man is here spoken of as exalted; and St. Paul directly connects His exaltation with His previous humiliation and passion: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him.' Finally, we have "the heavens opened" to a sinful child of man, in connexion with this glorious spectacle. "Behold, I see the heavens opened." Thus is implied the mediatorial character of the Man Christ Jesus; that He is the true Jacob's ladder, which spans the distance between heaven and earth, through whom alone our prayers ascend to God, and His blessings reach us; according to that word of His own, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Thus, that no point, even of form, might be wanting to make him a true martyr, Stephen witnesses the good confession before God, and

angels, and men ; and thereupon, for that testimony, is put to death.

May we find grace to feed and nourish our souls daily on the truth, which he sealed with his blood, the union of the Manhood with the Godhead in the Person of our glorified Redeemer. We have the nearest possible interest (by community of nature) in the great High Priest who is passed into the heavens ; " We are members," says St. Paul, " of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." He has carried up with Him into heaven the marks of His Passion, and the still more indelible marks, which the painful experience of human life has left upon His mind. Let us approach Him in full assurance of His sympathy, as an High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities ; let us believe that according to a profound law of the human mind, what He endured for our sakes has served still more to endear us to Him ; and let us appeal to Him by His Agony and Bloody Sweat, by His Cross and Passion, to come to our aid in every trial, and to welcome us, when our pilgrimage is concluded, to the place which He has prepared for us among the many mansions of His Father's House.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIRST MARTYRDOM.

"Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles."—ACTS vii. 57—60, and viii. 1.

WHEN the Jews, full of fury against Our Lord, delivered Him up to Pilate, notwithstanding the intensity of their excitement, they still stood, we are told, upon a point of ceremonial. "They themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled."

A similar combination of fury with attention to small points of form—the same hatred of the Truth, with the same scrupulous exactitude as

to the mode of gratifying their malignity—is seen in the passage before us. The witness which St. Stephen has borne to Our Lord's exaltation throws them into a wild frenzy against him : they start from their seats in the council, to sweep the blasphemer from the face of the earth, and clap their hands to their ears, to express their abhorrence of the blasphemy they had just heard. The question has often been discussed how the account of St. Stephen's martyrdom is to be reconciled with the acknowledgment made by the Jews in Our Lord's case—"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." The truth is, that the murder of St. Stephen was a tumultuary and altogether irregular proceeding, which took place in a moment of popular excitement. No sentence was pronounced; the proceedings of the court were terminated by a sudden outbreak of fury on the part of its members, which precluded any formal end to the trial. Capital punishment the Jews could not inflict as a right<sup>1</sup>; but it

<sup>1</sup> This is a moot point. The view here taken is (for the most part) that of Dean Alford, Archdeacon Wordsworth, and Dr. Howson. Krebsius (a considerable authority) is of another opinion. He thinks the Jews *had* the power of inflicting capital punishment, where the offence was against religion, but in no other criminal cases. And as a proof that

seems that occasionally, when they took the law into their own hands in this matter, the

religious offences might be capitally punished by them, he quotes the indignant words of Titus to John and his party, as quoted by Josephus:—"Have not you, vile wretches that you are, by our permission put up this partition-wall before your sanctuary? Have you not been allowed to put up the pillars thereto belonging at due distances, and on it to engrave in Greek and in our language" (query, in your own language?) "this prohibition, That no foreigner should go beyond that wall? *Have we not given you leave to kill such as go beyond it, though he were a Roman?* And what do you now? . . . Why do you pollute this holy house with the blood both of foreigners and of Jews themselves?" &c., &c. (Joseph., *Bell. Jud.* vi. 2. 4.) Christ, he says, was charged before Pilate, not on religious grounds, which Pilate would have little cared to investigate, but with sedition and treason; for which (political) crimes the Jews had not the power of punishing Him capitally. This is all he understands them to mean by "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (on a charge like this). He thinks that the words of Tertullus respecting St. Paul ("Who also hath gone about to profane the Temple: whom we took, *and would have judged according to our Law,*" Acts xxiv. 6), show that the Jews had power to take cognizance of religious offences. But the power of taking cognizance of them and inflicting minor punishments, surely does not necessarily imply the power of life and death. (See Krebs., *Observationes in Nov. Test.*, Lipsiæ, 1755, p. 155, et seq.)

Goodwyn also holds that the power of inflicting death for religious offences remained with the Jews. "Before we treat in particular of these four punishments, it may be questioned, whether the Jews had any power to judge of life and death, at that time when they crucified our blessed

Imperial Government thought it politic to con-  
 nive at the licence. The Jews were at all times

"Saviour. The Jews said to Pilate, It is not lawful for us  
 "to put any man to death, John xviii. 31. Latter Jews say  
 "that all power of capital punishments was taken from them  
 "forty years before the destruction of the second temple, and  
 "of this opinion are many divines.

"Answer—First, the Jews' speech unto Pilate that it was  
 "not lawful for them to put any man to death, cannot be under-  
 "stood as if they should have said, We have no power to put  
 "any man to death; for admit, that power in criminals were,  
 "in the *general*, taken from them, yet in this *particular*, power  
 "was permitted them at that time from Pilate, Take ye Him,  
 "and judge Him according to your law, John xviii. 31.  
 "Neither can it be said that their law could not condemn Him,  
 "if He had been a transgressor thereof, or that they had not  
 "out of their law to object against Him; for they say, They had  
 "a law, and by their law He ought to die, John xix. 7. It was  
 "not their want of *power*, but the *holiness of that time*, made  
 "them say it was unlawful. For they held it unlawful upon  
 "their *days of preparation* to sit on life and death, as hath  
 "been shown in the Chapter of translating feasts. And Friday,  
 "on which our Saviour was condemned, was *the preparation of*  
 "*their Sabbath*. Secondly, in the question, whether power of  
 "judging capital crimes were taken from them by the Romans,  
 "we are to distinguish between crimes. *Some crimes were*  
 "*transgressions of the Roman law*, as theft, murder, robberies,  
 "&c.; power of judging in these was taken from them;  
 "*other crimes were transgressions only against the law of*  
 "*Moses*, as blasphemy and the like; in these, power of judging  
 "seemeth to have remained in them. When Paul was  
 "brought by the Jews before Gallio, Gallio said unto them,  
 "If it were a matter of *wrong or wicked lewdness*, O ye Jews,  
 "reason would that I should bear with you; but if it be a  
 "*question of words, and names of your law*, look ye to it.

turbulent and fanatical; and it would not have been wise, especially where they were so jealous of interference as in matters of their own law, to hold the rein too tightly over them. Thus, if the governor were at the time absent from Jerusalem, the tumult before us, and the bloody outrage<sup>2</sup> to which it led, may easily have been overlooked. The Christians as a class had no power of making their voice heard with the Government; and the Jews may have felt that their hatred of the rising sect might be gratified with impunity. But what we are at present concerned to observe is, that though acting tumultuously and in a state of frenzy, the Jews

"Acts xviii. 14. (Goodwyn's *Moses and Aaron*, Ed. 7, "London, 1655, pp. 199, 200.)

<sup>2</sup> Josephus gives an instance of a similar outrage under similar circumstances. Festus, the Governor of Judæa, was dead, and Albinus was sent to succeed him. But "while Albinus was upon the road, Ananus, the high priest, assembled the Sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned." Joseph., *Ant.* xx. 9. 1. (It is not said that St. James was *actually* stoned;—a remark which perhaps may reconcile this passage of Josephus with the account of St. James's death given by Hegesippus.) Josephus adds that complaints of Ananus's illegal conduct in *assembling the Sanhedrim without the procurator's consent* were made to Albinus, and that he was removed from the high priesthood,

are still punctilious as to the method of inflicting their punishment. "*They cast him out of the city.*" This was in pursuance of the law in Leviticus<sup>3</sup>, that he who had blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed, should be *brought forth without the camp* and there stoned. When the Israelites had settled in the promised land, all walled towns were, according to the teaching of their doctors, to be considered as representing the camp<sup>4</sup>, and the execution of malefactors was

<sup>3</sup> See Levit. xxiv. 16. The law of blasphemy was given on occasion of "the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father "was an Egyptian," blaspheming the name of the Lord in the course of a quarrel. He was directed to be stoned, after all who heard him had laid their hands upon his head.

Lightfoot, however, remarks that no one was condemned as a blasphemer who had not abused the sacred Name of four letters (Jehovah). Among offences punishable with stoning was that of deceiving and drawing others into apostasy, under which category he supposes the offence charged against Stephen would have fallen. (Lightfoot, *Hor. Heb. in Act. Apost.*, ad loc.)

<sup>4</sup> "Locus lapidationis erat extra urbem: omnes enim civitates muris cinctæ paritatem habent ad castra Israelis." Dean Alford, *ad loc.*, quoting from *Babyl. Sanhedr.*

The camp of the wilderness was regarded as stereotyped in the walled town of the promised land, and particularly in Jerusalem. The thought of this parity between the camp and city is traceable in that beautiful passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews (xiii. 11): "The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned *without the camp*. Wherefore Jesus also,

therefore to take place *outside the gate*. When arrived at a suitable spot, the punishment proceeded in the regular way<sup>1</sup>, the witnesses (i.e.,

"that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, "suffered *without the gate*. Let us go forth, therefore, unto "Him *without the camp*, bearing His reproach."

The sentence on the man who was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day (Numb. xv. 35) was, "All the congregation "shall stone him with stones *without the camp*." And when Naboth was found guilty of blaspheming God and the king, "they *carried him forth out of the city*, and stoned him with "stones, that he died." (1 Kings xxi. 13.)

<sup>1</sup> In an ordinary execution by stoning there were several rules, which no doubt were punctiliously observed. 1. A man stood at the door of the council-chamber with a handkerchief in his hand, and a horseman was posted on the road to the place of execution just within sight of him. If any one alleged any thing in favour of the condemned, while he was on his road to execution, this man waved his handkerchief to the horseman, who overtook the party and brought them back. 2. If nothing was alleged in arrest of the sentence, the party went on to the place, a crier preceding the criminal, and making proclamation thus:—"N., the son of N., cometh forth "to be stoned, because he hath committed such a crime. N. "and N. are witnesses against him. If any man can testify "any thing in his favour, let him come forth and bear his testimony." 3. When they are ten cubits distant from the place of execution, they exhort the criminal to confess, that he may have his portion in the world to come. 4. When within four cubits of the place, the criminal is stripped. 5. The place of stoning is twice the height of a man. One of the witnesses throws down the criminal on his loins. (If he turns over on his chest, he is to be rolled back upon his loins.) If he dies by this fall, well; if not, the second witness raises a stone and

the persons who had deposed to the blasphemies of Stephen against the Temple and the Ritual) first stripping themselves of their loose outer robes, and appearing in the tight-fitting tunic, which did not impede exertion, and then casting the first stone at the accused. This was in pursuance of the Law in Deuteronomy regulating the punishment of the idolater, which was held binding, it would appear, also in the punishment of the blasphemer (Deut. xvii.). "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses; shall he that is worthy of death be put to death. . . . The hands of the witnesses shall be *first* upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."

The outer garment, which was wrapt round the person for warmth at night, had some value. This also may be seen from the Levitical Law, in which we read—"If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down; for throws it on his heart. If he dies so, well; if not, he is stoned by all Israel." (Lightfoot, *Hor. Heb. in Act. Apost.*, ad loc.)

If this was the regular method of stoning at St. Stephen's time, his execution must clearly have been tumultuary and irregular.

“that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin : wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto Me, that I will hear ; for I am gracious.” Now, it was likely enough that in such an uproar as that which attended the death of St. Stephen, dishonest persons would be hanging about on the skirts of the mob, ready to seize any property which was dropped, or loosely guarded by its owners. It was therefore customary at executions to appoint some known person to take charge of the raiment of those who had to carry the sentence into effect. This charge was in the present case devolved upon the young man from the Cilician synagogue who had shown such deep interest in the trial, and who manifested so emphatically his concurrence with the proceedings against Stephen. He gladly accepted the trust ; the clothes were thrown down *at his feet*, in sign of being given into his custody, just as the laying down money at the Apostles’ feet was a sign of entrusting it to their disposal and administration ; and, standing or sitting upon them, he witnessed the cruel scene, motionless in person, but his mind on the alert.

Other particulars respecting the punishment

of stoning, which perhaps may have been observed in the case before us, are worthy of a brief notice. The criminal being bound, was led to a place outside the gates twice the height of a man \*. Thence he was thrown down by a heavy blow upon the loins which one of the witnesses inflicted. Then the witnesses raised between them a single stone of such a size that the strength of two men was necessary to lift it, which was tumbled upon the chest of the criminal. If this failed to kill him, all the people threw stones upon him, until some vital part was bruised. The punishment was a cruel and uncertain one; and we gather from the Pentateuch that the Jews learned it, like so many other customs, in Egypt<sup>7</sup>.

Withdrawing our eyes from the circumstantial of the scene, we must now fasten them upon the holy martyr. And the point which we observe in him at this crisis is his studied imitation of the Master, in whose cause he was

\* Goodwyn (*Moses and Aaron*), from whom these particulars are taken, says *two cubits* high. I take the measurement which Lightfoot gives (see Note <sup>6</sup>, p. 171), as the longer fall would give the better chance of killing the criminal.

<sup>7</sup> "Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and *will they not stone us?*" Exod. viii. 26.

encountering death. With admirable presence of mind, he is looking away unto Jesus as his model, and so fixing the mental eye upon Him whose glorified form he had just seen with the bodily eye, that he seems absorbed in the study, insensible to pain, and unconscious of the fury of his enemies. "Christ," says Augustine, "sat upon the chair of the Cross, and taught "Stephen" the rule of devotion."

We find the disciple distinctly imitating two of the sayings of his Master upon the Cross—framing his utterances as nearly as possible upon the same model. The first of these sayings was the latest which fell from Our Lord's lips—"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The resemblance of this to, and its differences from, the martyr's utterance—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"—are full of interest. The *resemblance* is obvious on the surface. The wise man's description of death is as follows:—"Then "shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and "the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." A resignation therefore of the spirit to God in the hour of death would seem to be the par-

\* "Sedebat in cathedrâ crucis Christus, et docebat Stephanum regulam pietatis." Augustine, in *Natali Stephani Martyris*, as quoted by Archdeacon Wordsworth on the Acts.

ticular act of devotion suitable to that hour. The soul should be laid in the lap of the Father of spirits, from whose bosom it came forth. We see this sentiment evidently in Christ. And we see a strong trace of it in St. Stephen. But there are three great *differences* of position between the Master and the disciple, which make the latter to alter in his own case the phraseology employed by the former.

(1.) The first is, that Our Blessed Lord was a perfectly righteous Man, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." And being perfectly righteous, He can speak, when dying, in accents of confidence which would not so well beseem a sinner. What in His mouth therefore is a simple and solemn commendation, is turned in Stephen's into a humble prayer. Our Lord does what His disciple only petitions to be allowed to do. How undesignedly here does Stephen's consciousness of his own sinful nature come out! I do not know that there is any glimpse of it in the rest of the narrative, but this last cry opens to us in Stephen's heart that conscious unworthiness, which characterizes saints just in proportion to their holiness. He is making the sacrifice of his life to Christ; yet how far is he from looking

to this sacrifice for acceptance! He petitions the Saviour to receive his spirit, which is tantamount to saying, "Cast me not out." And why should the Saviour cast him out? Why should Stephen think such a contingency possible? Because there was a deep sense of indeliberate in his inner man. The glory which he had seen he had come short of; he had no claim but that of Christ's love to lay down his head upon the Lord's breast. So he will not lay it there without humbly soliciting permission. So far is he from pleading his martyrdom as a title to repose in death, that he asks as a favour this repose from his Saviour—"Lord Jesus" (or Lord Saviour), "receive my spirit."

(2.) But, again, in *Christ's* commendation of His spirit into the hands of His Heavenly Father, there was a peculiar significance, understood, no doubt, by His early disciples, which made the terms strictly appropriate to no one but Himself. In His mouth they were tantamount to—"I resign My life; the sacrifice is not wrung from Me by human violence; it is not imposed upon Me by necessity, nor, indeed, by My Father's will, apart from My own concurrence; no man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." In short, the words express the voluntary surren-

der of life by the great High Priest as an expiation for the sins of men. Any follower of His, who had the least inkling of this significance in them, would shun the use of exactly the same expression, while maintaining the leading idea of a commendation of the soul into God's hands.

(3.) But the most instructive point in St. Stephen's variation from his original is, that he prays Christ, not God, to receive his soul, thus recognizing most emphatically the *Mediatorship* of Our Blessed Lord. "There is one God, and "one Mediator between God and men, the Man "Christ Jesus." "He which is of God, He" (and He alone) "hath seen the Father." He may, and He does, transact with God directly without any intervening medium; He goes up boldly to the Throne of Grace with guiltless conscience, and, in full confidence of acceptance, says—"Father, "into Thy hands I commend My spirit." But not so a sinner. Sinners must pass along the Way, must enter through the Door, to obtain access to a holy God. "I am the Way; no "man cometh unto the Father but by Me." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the Door "of the sheep." Stephen therefore transacts with Our Lord in his last moments, and not,

except mediately, with God. And what a lesson of comfort for our own deathbeds does this first dying Christian teach us hereby! The mental and moral attitude of a dying Christian should be the same as the bodily attitude which St. John was privileged to assume at the table of the Last Supper. "Now there was *leaning on Jesus' bosom* one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." Christ lays His head, when dying, into the Father's lap; we should lay ours into His lap, encouraged to do so by the remembrance of His human sympathies, by the thought that He is a High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; that He knows by experience the trial of pain, and the greater trial of mental depression in the last hour; and that withal His death is our true passage into life; the raft which can buoy us up on the waves of the dark River, and carry us securely into the haven of Eternal Life.

We now come to another particular in which the disciple, when encountering death, evidently set before him the Master as his model in his prayer for his murderers.—"*He kneeled down.*" The account given of this kneeling in a work of

some authority' is—"Another crash of stones brought him on his knees." I can hardly accept this as the true meaning of the somewhat solemn words, "*he kneeled down*"—words never used elsewhere in the New Testament, except as descriptive of homage offered to God or Christ. I take them in connexion with God's ordinance, as recorded by St. Paul, "that at the name of "Jesus every knee should bow, of things in "heaven, and things in earth, and things under "the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of "God the Father." I find Stephen, when one would think that his circumstances dispensed

' "As the first volley of stones burst upon him, he called "upon the Master, whose human form he had just seen in "the heavens, and repeated almost the words with which He "had Himself given up His life on the cross. . . . . *Another "crash of stones brought him on his knees.*" Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iii. p. 1379.

Surely this is inaccurate. Stephen was probably thrown down in the first instance (that being the manner of the execution, as shown above), but before life was extinct, that his last act might be a protest alike for his adoration of his Master, and his love to his enemies, he raised himself to his knees, and prayed to the Lord Jesus for his murderers with his last breath. No sooner had the words escaped him, than his head (perhaps) was struck with a stone, and he fell back and expired.

with all such outward signs, doing bodily homage to the name of Jesus, in acknowledgment that God had highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, and confessing with his tongue immediately afterwards that Jesus Christ is Lord. St. Stephen's was to be the pattern martyrdom for all ages of the Church; and no point of testimony to Christ, whether it be the moral testimony of the way in which death is endured, or whether it be a mere posture of the body, is to be omitted.—*"And cried with a loud voice."* A contrast is here clearly pointed at between Stephen's death-cry and the slaughter-cry of the Jews which preceded it in the 57th verse. "Then they *"cried out with a loud voice."* *They* cried out in fury, in abhorrence, in deadly hatred; the wolves gnashed their teeth upon this innocent sheep of Christ's fold. And as grievous words stir up anger, and wrath usually begets wrath, we might expect that Stephen's loud cry would be one of holy defiance against them; "Do your worst, hellhounds; I shall soon be beyond your reach." In the former days of Jewish history, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, a prophet-priest, moved (like Stephen) by the Spirit of God, had been (like Stephen) stoned

with stones, at the commandment of King Joash, in the court of the house of the Lord. And with his expiring breath Zechariah had uttered a malediction on his murderers. "When he died," he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it." The curse had not been causeless; and in due time it came. Our Lord foretold that upon the Jews of His generation, the very Jews who murdered St. Stephen, should "come all the "righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the "blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of "Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom they slew "between the Temple and the Altar."

Now, shall Stephen's last cry be like the cry of Zacharias? Shall he invoke requital upon those who are battering his body, and announce requital as imminent? Stephen had not so learned Christ. Our Lord, "sitting on the chair "of the Cross," had taught him a different lesson. For when the signal had been given to fasten his prostrate body to the accursed tree, and, beneath the first sharp impact of the nails, His Blood started forth for the remission of our sins, He intercedes for His murderers—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Abel's blood cried for vengeance; but Christ's Blood, the Blood of sprinkling, speaketh better

things than that of Abel. The disciple has marked this, and laid it to heart. He has heard, too, the Master's precept, repealing the traditional maxims which had gathered round the Elder Code—"But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" and he has seen this precept illustrated by the Master's example. Now he will make himself a faithful copyist, echoing Christ in all things, except where his position makes a necessary difference in his sentiments. So he meets the infuriated clamour of his opponents with a clamour for mercy to be shown to them—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" and thus shows in the most emphatic way that vehement righteous indignation against sin is quite compatible with love to the person of the sinner, and that the lofty invective just hurled by him against that wicked council had in it no grain of personal animosity.

"And when he had said this, he fell asleep," or rather (for the form of the verb in the original is passive) "he was laid asleep"—laid asleep by the loving Master to whom he had so lately appealed. That Master received his spirit, closed his

eyes upon his persecutors, their fury, and their stones, and opened them on the beautiful Paradise, where the souls of the faithful enjoy a halcyon calm after the storms of life have exhausted themselves; "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest." Stephen was the first of those happy souls whose destiny is prophetically described by St. Paul in that great oracle—"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" ("those which sleep in Jesus"—an inaccurate translation; literally, "those who are laid asleep through the instrumentality of,—through the mediation of Jesus, will God bring with Him"). We have seen how St. Stephen in his last moments had recourse consciously to the mediation of Our Lord. Now we are told how that recourse stood him in stead; how the Lord interposed in his behalf, and laid him asleep; how, in virtue of His sufferings who died and rose again, Stephen enjoyed in death the deepest tranquillity of spirit. Jesus *died*—faced death in all its horrors, mental and physical. Stephen's departure, through the mediation of Jesus, was not to be called death. Our Lord had promised—"He that liveth, and believeth in Me, shall never

“die;” and St. Luke must be careful not to contradict his Master’s words. So he says not that Stephen died, but that Stephen was laid asleep. The death of the believer is only a being laid asleep.

Moreover, the Lord heard Stephen’s dying prayer when Stephen was no more. As the answer to Christ’s prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers was the centurion’s acknowledgment—“Truly, this man was the Son of “God”—so the answer to St. Stephen’s prayer will be the conversion of that young man, who sits there on yonder heap of clothes watching the execution. You can see now, by the reflection in his features of the workings of his mind, that the answer is preparing.

The great lesson which results from the whole subject is, that Our Lord’s death is not only to be looked to as an Atonement, but studied as an Example. The technical distinctions of Theology (good and quite necessary in their place) have made us familiar with the thought of Christ’s death as our sacrifice, and of His life as our copy. That most valuable collect for the second Sunday after Easter serves to fix this distinction in the minds of members of our Church ;

"Almighty God, who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin and also an ensample of godly life ; Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord." But for the clear apprehension of truth, it is often necessary to distinguish in idea things which are not actually separated in fact. Our justification and our sanctification must be kept separate in idea, if we would not fall into a sad tangle in our theological views ; but as a fact they are always closely united. So with the life and death of Our Lord. Both were atonements, and both were examples. The life, commencing with the Incarnation, and involving all the trials and sufferings of Christ short of death, was atoning in every part. And the death similarly was an example, as well as an atonement, in its every feature. If we desire to learn how the desolateness of spirit, which characterizes many Christian deathbeds, should be met ; how our own sufferings in death may be lightened by unselfish thought of, and care for, others ; or even how provision should be made on a deathbed (if not before) for those who

are dependent upon us, all these points may be learned from the Cross of Christ. And it is obvious to remark that in studying the Cross with this view, we must bear in mind, as Stephen did, the vast difference of position between the Divine Sufferer and ourselves; and only appropriate His example so far as our circumstances warrant. So far as His conduct in death illustrates the law which He has given for our guidance, so far it is our model and our best model. There are particulars, of course, as reason itself teaches, in which the dying Saviour is incapable of imitation.

May the meditation on the circumstances of His death be the one great devotional study of our lives! And may we study those circumstances, not only with a view to present edification, but to future use. A day will come to all of us, when we shall be laid upon the bed of languishing, and when flesh and heart shall fail; when pain and weakness will distract us from hearing, reading, or pursuing steadily one train of reflection. Snatches of comfortable thought will then be all that we shall have to uphold the soul. And these will come to us readily and almost instinctively, if by constant devout study the narrative of the Cross of Christ has

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sunk deep into our souls. And such thoughts will give us material for our prayers, at least for such prayers as alone are possible on a deathbed—the rapid upward glances of the mental eye to Christ. And prayer will call Him to our bedside, to give us strength in proportion to our needs, and at length to receive our spirit, and lay us asleep in His faith and fear, where St. John lay of old, upon His own bosom.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE MARTYR'S FUNERAL.

"And about men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."—ACTS viii. 2.

THREE burials of Christians are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and between the first two and the last there is a striking contrast. Ananias and Sapphira died by the miraculous visitation of God, and immediately upon their death we read that "the young men" (certain juniors who perhaps were recognized<sup>1</sup> as functionaries of the Christian congregation and attendants upon the Apostles) "wound them up, and "carried them forth," and laid them side by side in the tomb; the man first, the woman about

<sup>1</sup> "Here" (in Jerusalem), "the Apostles had *attendants* to assist them in the lower and more mechanical parts of their duties; for such appear to have been the 'young men' who carried out the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, probably answering to 'the minister' who is described as waiting on Barnabas and Saul—they had John to their 'minister.'" Blunt's *First Three Centuries*, p. 47. 1856.

three hours later. And this was the first Christian funeral, the hurried committal to the earth of two most audacious sinners, who had the hardihood to make a false profession in the face of the Church, and of the rulers of the Church, whom God had so accredited on the day of Pentecost. It was a sombre death indeed, this death of the two first Christians who ever descended into the dark valley; there was no single ray of light or comfort about it; and the event must have struck a chill to the heart of the Church, and of those who were on the eve of conversion. It was a peril to belong to this community, endowed not merely with miracles of language and healing, but with miracles of judgment also; in Church membership there was a nearness to the invisible world and its powers, a nearness to death, as well as to life, which might well make insincere candidates for the honour tremble and reflect. "Great fear," we are told, "came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things." Was this fear a salutary effect? Eminently so. Would that we could see more of it in our own days! Would that the Church, or Christian congregation, were now-a-days recognized as the theatre of numberless super-

natural agencies and powers of the world to come, although the supernatural agencies are no longer capable of being recognized by the senses ! What a different thing would the worship even of devout persons be, if there were in it a deeper element of awe, arising from a feeling of the nearness of the spiritual world—if, while we offered our prayers and praises in the House of God, we not only gave our attention to the words employed, but also realized more or less vividly such truths as these, that Our Lord Himself is in the midst of the two or three gathered together in His Name ; that Angels wait around us, to convey our prayers upwards, and God's blessings downwards ; that a great incense cloud of prayer and praise is constantly going up from every corner of the Church militant, however remote from us ; that the spirits of the faithful dead are holding communion with the same Lord as ourselves, a communion closer than those can hold who are still in the flesh ; that generally our membership in Christ gives us a living interest and concern in the unseen world ; that the Mediator, may be, is now pleading our own cause in Heaven, or that our present tenure of life, or present enjoyment of opportunities, has been won for us by

His all-prevailing prayer. In short, what a thrill of reverential awe would be communicated to our worship, if every time we crossed the Church threshold we entered into the spirit and significance of those words, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

One more remark shall be made on the burial of Ananias and Sapphira, before we pass on to that of St. Stephen. The incident looks in this direction, though of course it must not be pressed unwarrantably hard, that funeral rites are not to be denied to those who die (to all appearance) under God's displeasure. We may not judge such persons to be ultimately excluded from God's favour, because we cannot read the heart, and we know not what wonders the Grace of God may work (if it so please Him), "in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye." There is an

old and well-known epitaph on a bad man killed by a sudden fall from his horse, which says—

“Between the saddle and the ground  
He mercy sought and mercy found.”

Certainly it may have been so. And if it may have been so, we are bound to hope that it was so. It is impossible for sinners to die under greater evidences of God's displeasure than did this unhappy pair. Yet the Church seems to have treated their remains with all pious respect. Though they had been stricken dead on hearing the censure of the Apostle, there is no trace of their having been excommunicated by man. “The young men arose, wound him up, and “carried him out, and buried him.” This was reverent and tender treatment of the offender. For of whom do we read in an earlier page of the New Testament, that they took His Body, and “wound it in linen clothes, as the manner of the “Jews was to bury,” and “laid it in a sepulchre?” Even of that Holy One of God who saw no corruption, and who has sanctified for us by His submission to them, not death only, but funeral rites and pious sepulture.

Never were death and burial more gloomy than in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Never were they brighter than in the case of St. Stephen. St. Stephen died in an outburst of popular fury. But he had such evidences as man has never had before or since, that he died in the favour of God, and in the full sunshine of His smile. He was consoled in his last hour by the sight of the glory of God, and of his Saviour standing at God's right hand to succour and receive him. The spirit seemed in him to have gained such a mastery of the flesh, as almost to render it insensible to suffering. With a bruised and maimed body he continued to kneel down, and do the last act of homage to his Master, the last act of charity to his murderers. Could there be a spectacle more edifying, more elevating, more exalting to our nature than this constancy, this holy joyousness, this triumph over pain in death? It is recorded of Socrates that the disciples who witnessed his nobleness in the endurance of death, were singularly impressed by the sight; the victory mind gained over matter in the philosopher<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "I was indeed wonderfully affected by being present, for I was not impressed with a feeling of pity, like one present at the death of a friend; for the man appeared to me to be happy, both from his manner and discourse, so fearlessly and nobly did he meet his death—so much so, that it occurred to me, that in going to Hades he was not going without a divine

affected them in an indescribable manner. But what was that triumph of Reason in death, to this triumph of Grace in death? Socrates did not die a cruel death; the circumstances were not violent, passionate, savage, bloody. After drinking the poison, and walking up and down for a while, he threw himself on his bed, when an insensibility seized upon his extremities, and crept up his body till it reached the heart. When he opened his eyes for his last look, they rested on the friendly and sympathizing faces of his disciples and admirers. Calmness and firmness under such circumstances might perhaps be achieved by nature—by the last strong effort of an habitually well-disciplined mind. But in St. Stephen's case there was every circumstance which could make death repulsive, shocking, frightful. Several limbs might be broken in such a manner of death before the fatal blow was given. Stoning was almost as uncertain and almost as cruel a form of execution as the being broken on the wheel.

"destiny, but that when he arrived there, he would be happy, if any one ever was. . . . An altogether unaccountable feeling possessed me, a kind of unusual mixture compounded of pleasure and pain, when I considered that he was immediately about to die." Plato's *Phædo*, ch. 5.

His brethren in Christ were doubtless not far off from the holy martyr, but they were quite powerless to help him; and the faces on which *he* looked in his last hour, or rather from which he turned away to look on his Saviour, were those of furious fanatics, who gnashed upon him with their teeth. Perfect self-possession, joyous self-possession in that hour, a face radiant with the hope of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—was it any thing less than supernatural? Under these circumstances we are hardly prepared, perhaps, for the agony of grief exhibited by those who carried forth to burial the mangled remains of the martyr. They are said to have been “devout men,”—a phrase which is elsewhere applied to pious Jews, “devout men according to the law,” but which does not in the least prevent our understanding that these were Christianized\* Jews,

\* It has been thought that Christians would not have been allowed to bury St. Stephen; and further that, had they done so, they would have been called “brethren.” Meyer finds an indication that they were not Christians in the δὲ which succeeds συνεκδύσαν. “The disciples” (except the Apostles) “were dispersed far and wide throughout “Judæa and Samaria;” (so you might think the martyr had no obsequies) “*but* devout Jews buried him with the wailing “customary to Judaism,” &c. (See the Commentaries of Dean Alford and Archdeacon Wordsworth.)

who had received the Gospel. Ananias, who was the instrument of restoring St. Paul's eyesight, is called a "devout man according to the law;" yet he is expressly called "a disciple," nor could he have administered Baptism to St. Paul, unless he had received it himself. Unbelieving Jews are hardly likely to have buried St. Stephen, and certainly not likely to have made great lamentation over him; for it was forbidden among the Jews to make lamentation for those who died (as St. Stephen virtually died) by sentence<sup>4</sup> of the Sanhedrim. I assume, then,

From the circumstance that between the account of Stephen's death, and that of his burial, St. Luke has interposed a notice of the persecution which scattered the disciples, certain Romish writers have taken occasion to bolster up the legend that St. Stephen's body was not buried till after the persecution had subsided; that, after lying unburied a day and a night, it was "borne on the carriage of Gamaliel to Caphargamala, twenty miles distant from Jerusalem, where lamentation was made seventy days." A notable instance of Romish additions to the Word of God. (See Bishop Pearson's *Strictures on Baronius* in his *Lectures on the Acts*, Ed. Crowfoot, 1851, p. 54.)

<sup>4</sup> Sanhedr. fol. 46 i. *They do not bury one who has been condemned by the Sanhedrim, in the sepulchre of his fathers. And this is assigned as the reason, Because they do not bury the innocent with the guilty.* Which custom they also deduce from the story of the common man who was cast into Elisha's sepulchre, but did not remain there but revived. . . . Moreover, *They do not make any outward wailing for one con-*

that these bearers and mourners were of exactly the same class as Ananias of Damascus—devout Jews, well reported of and reputed in their own nation, who had received Baptism, and become disciples of Christ, but who probably exemplified Christianity after the Jewish and early type of it, rather than after the later development which St. Paul gave to it. And for those who believe that God's Word is full of wonderful coincidences, which come out in greater abundance the more we study it, there is something interesting in the circumstance that "devout men "according to the law" ushered St. Stephen out of the world, and St. Paul (so to say) into it. St. Paul (as we have often had occasion to notice) sprang from the blood of St. Stephen ;

*demned by the Sanhedrim, but only mourn for him (in the heart).* And there was a common notion among the Jews that the more dishonourably a condemned man was buried, and the less he was bewailed, the greater compensation would he receive from the remission of his sins. *They do not bewail him, that this dishonour may tell towards the expiation of his sins.*

Those then who performed the obsequies of Stephen, showed a well-merited contempt for the absurd idea of procuring expiation by dishonour after death, for WELL THEY KNEW THAT THE EXPIATION OF STEPHEN'S SINS FLOWED FROM A NOBLER SOURCE. (Lightfoot. *Hor. Heb. in Act. Apost.*, ad loc.)

he was Stephen resuscitated; he went forth in the spirit and power of Stephen, just as John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elias. Now the last time we see St. Stephen upon earth, we see him in the hands of "devout men according to the law;"—Judaism, in the person of its choicest and most unimpeachable representatives, deploras him, and sets its seal and lays its hand upon him as an holy man of God. And when he who stood up in the spirit and power of St. Stephen is to be introduced upon the stage of the Acts of the Apostles, "a devout man according to the law" authenticates him; Judaism, in one of its best representatives, sets its seal and lays its hand upon him as an holy man of God, Christ's disciples had every where the attestation, not indeed of Pharisees and Scribes, but of those who were Jews inwardly, and had received the spiritual as well as the outward circumcision.

But (to return from this digression), what account shall we give, consistent with the circumstances, of the conduct of these mourners at the funeral of the first martyr? They carried Stephen to his funeral (a word is here used in the original, which is also applied to the

ingathering of a harvest<sup>5</sup>, the sheltering of it in the granary from weather; we might translate "devout men *gathered* or *in-gathered* Stephen") "and made great lamentation over him." The lamentation here spoken of was a formal Jewish wailing<sup>6</sup> for the dead, in the oriental fashion. Among orientals our way of mourning for the dead appears tame; they beat their breasts, strike their heads, tear their hair, to express the vividness of their emotion. Our Lord saw something of this kind proceeding in Jairus's house, ("he cometh to the house of the "ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the *tumult*, "and them that wept and wailed greatly,") and He does not seem to have been pleased with what He saw; He desired a calmer grief in the death chamber; for before He restored the girl to life, He closed the door upon the minstrels and mourners. Now how was it that this vehement mourning, or rather wailing (the

<sup>5</sup> Συγκομιζω is only used once in the Greek Testament (in the place before us), and once in the Septuagint, Job v. 26—"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like a shock of "corn *cometh in* in his season." Stephen, though he may have been green in years, was ripe in grace and meet for ingathering.

<sup>6</sup> The word *κωπὴ* literally implies a beating of the head or breast from grief.

words in the original quite express as much as this), went on at the sepulchre of St. Stephen? Does not the wailing of these devout men on such an occasion seem excessive and somewhat misplaced? Was not Stephen happy—happy past all thought and all expression? Had not his ecstatic words, his glowing countenance, proclaimed as much? Was he not in his Lord's Bosom? Had he not seen the Lord opening to him that Bosom? How could they "wail" over one so highly honoured, so singularly privileged? If they must needs think of the loss which the Church had sustained in him, could not He, who had taken him, repair that loss? The choirs of Heaven, doubtless, burst into a symphony of praise and triumph, as the first martyr entered into the joy of his Lord. But the Church militant, which should sympathize with the Church triumphant, responds to the triumph song of Heaven by the lugubrious wailing of earth, by the beaten breast and the rent garment. How was this?

Observe, in answer to these questions,—

1. That the great wailing, which was to a certain extent ceremonial, and after Jewish usage, was doubtless intended to do honour to the martyr. It was as much as saying;

“Though the world has cast him out, and  
“though, alas ! we, his brothers in Christ, were  
“unable to shield him from the effects of their  
“malice, we will at least give him the full honours  
“of burial, and thus confess before men Christ,  
“for whom Stephen died. We will take this  
“opportunity of publicly recording our protest  
“against the Sanhedrin’s judgment as an ini-  
“quitous one. We were too weak to shield  
“him, but we will at least show all respect to his  
“remains.” To transfer the incident to our own  
range of associations, it was as if at the funeral  
of some person in our own times who had incurred  
obloquy, unpopularity, and harsh treatment  
for his piety, a great demonstration of public  
feeling was made, men of rank and station, as  
well as a great number of the poor, accompany-  
ing the coffin to its resting-place. A protest,  
coming too late, against the wrongful judgment  
of the world.

2. Assuming that by this great wailing is to  
be understood not merely customary funeral  
honours, but a somewhat extravagant grief, it  
is to be remembered that the Church of Christ  
was in its earliest infancy, and that the disciples  
had yet many lessons to learn respecting death  
and the way of viewing it, which only experience

could teach. Nothing is further from the truth than the very common supposition that by the descent of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost, the Church was endowed with a full measure of light, superseding the necessity of gradual instruction in Divine Truth. Even the Apostles had still to learn after Pentecost the doctrine that "the Gentiles were fellow heirs and "partakers of God's promise" in Christ by the Gospel; and if Apostles needed subsequent discipline in divine mysteries, how much more ordinary believers! As regards those brethren who fell asleep in Christ, it is quite clear that Christian doctrine had yet to undergo a development, and Christian practice an improvement. It is evident from St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians that those who died before the predicted return of Our Lord, were supposed to labour under some disadvantage, and to incur some great forfeiture. It was a notion of this kind which drew forth the Apostolic warning; "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, "concerning them which are asleep, that ye "sorrow not, even as others, which have no "hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and "rose again, even so them also which sleep in "Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we

“say unto you by the word of the Lord, that  
“we which are alive and remain unto the coming  
“of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are  
“asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend  
“from heaven with a shout, with the voice of  
“the Archangel, and with the trump of God ;  
“and the dead in Christ shall *rise first*. Then we  
“which are alive and remain shall be caught up  
“together with them in the clouds, to meet the  
“Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the  
“Lord.” The devout men who carried St. Stephen  
to his burial had never read or heard these comfortable words. They had not yet received what I may call the doctrine of death in Christ, and the precept of moderation in sorrow founded upon that doctrine. Notwithstanding Stephen’s transfiguration and Stephen’s rapture, it seemed to them that the having been swept from the earth before the appearance of the kingdom of Christ, was for him a great calamity. When the Lord came to receive His own unto Himself, He would not find Stephen ; the violence of the enemy had robbed His fold of that sheep. Hence, perhaps, the vehemence of their lamentations. More knowledge would have made them calmer. We who have been in possession of that knowledge from our childhood, and to

whom the thought of death being gain is familiar, cannot view the subject from their standing-point.

3. But there is a useful practical lesson to be drawn from the grief exhibited at the death of St. Stephen, as also from the quieter weeping of the widows (later in the book) on the death of Dorcas, which we shall do well not to overlook. It is pleasing to notice the perfect naturalness and inartificiality of the characters of Holy Scripture, even under the lead of grace. The history of the Church has shown that nothing is commoner than for piety to take exaggerated and caricatured forms. It may be true piety at bottom, and yet, from a zeal not according to knowledge, may so strain the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel as to lose all naturalness, and therefore all charm. It seems as if any truth, whether in faith or in worship, if ridden too hard, would break down under us. Due reverence and honour to holy men, in whom the Spirit of God manifestly dwells—a deference to their judgment, an imitation of their manners, is a sound and good sentiment; but if you press it unduly, it will pass into Mariolatry and the worship of Saints, and become an absurd and plameworthy extravagance. The love of God's

worship and the desire to make the worship of the Church militant approximate as much as possible to that of the Church triumphant, is doubtless an element of all piety ; but you may go so far in ritualism, and in the observance of symbolical forms and ceremonies, as to do away entirely the simplicity of Christian worship. And in submission to the will of God (which we may call the fundamental principle of piety) you may wind yourself up, with great reluctance from nature, to a sort of stoicism of feeling respecting calamity, which is a totally different thing from the sorrow-stricken but calm grief of the Christian.

Now in the passages I have referred to there is a reproof of all such affectation and extravagance. The Church loses St. Stephen, and though their loss is St. Stephen's great gain, yet these simple-hearted men do not strive to conceal their natural emotions of grief and disappointment. The poor widows, whom Dorcas had relieved, felt that in her they had lost their best friend ; they do not affect insensibility to their loss, or pretend that God's dispensation in taking her had not cut their hearts to the quick, but give free vent to their grief in the presence of an Apostle ; "They stood by him weeping,

“and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made.” Nothing in Christianity forbids sorrow for the dead on the ground of natural and long-indulged affection for them. The sorrow which is forbidden is a sorrow like that “of those who have no hope.”

And it is to be carefully observed that the consolation, which the Apostle administers to Thessalonian mourners, is addressed to, and therefore recognizes, their natural affection for the deceased. He does not put his hand somewhat rudely upon the mourner's mouth (as some modern religionists would do) and say, “It is the will of God to take them; therefore hush!” He does not say to the wounded heart, “Bleed not;” but, “See whether this assurance, “‘You shall shortly meet them again,’ does not “stanch the bleeding;” “For if we believe that “Jesus died and rose again, even so them also “which sleep in Jesus will God bring with “Him.”

Aim, then, at receiving the Gospel in all simplicity of heart. True, it has not done what it must do for you if it have not made you spiritual men. But in spiritualizing a man the Gospel does not strip him of his natural instincts and emotions; it only purifies and rectifies them.

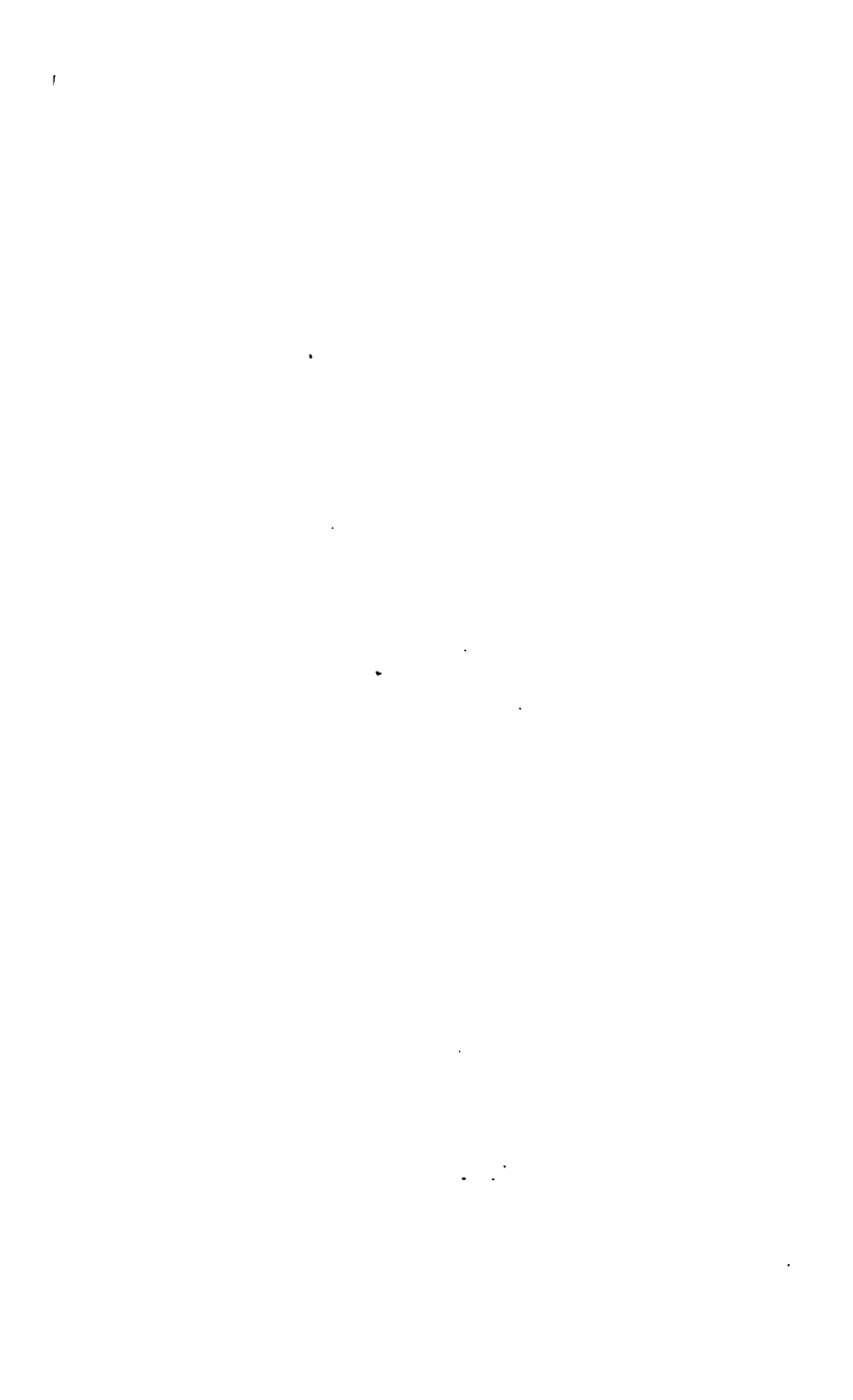
To spiritualize is not to *denaturalize*, but to *supernaturalize*.

4. Finally; what the Church did in the case of St. Stephen is an authority for paying all due and customary respect to the remains of the departed. Natural feeling dictates this; and natural feeling is, as we have seen, to be heard. But the Faith in Christ joins with natural feeling in demanding this last tribute. For the Faith teaches that the bodies of Christians are at present temples of the Holy Ghost and members of Christ, instruments of His service and glory. And again, that these bodies are not doomed to annihilation; that the grave is, as Pearson beautifully says, only a wardrobe for them, from which they shall one day be taken forth in resurrection glory as the clothing of the renewed and holy soul. We must respect them therefore, in life and death. In life, by keeping them unsoiled by any sensual defilement, and by employing our members constantly in our Master's service. In death by pious obsequies, and by making our funerals more of an act of devotion, less of a ceremony. Our Order for the Burial of the Dead holds out every inducement to do this. It comprises every topic of hope and consolation, it furnishes every prayer and aspi-

ration, appropriate to bereavement. Let us not content ourselves with using it on the occasions for which it is designed ; let us study it with prayer, as one of the greatest masterpieces ever composed of Christian devotion. The more we imbibe the spirit of it, the more calmly and cheerfully shall we look at death, the more shall we be resigned to bereavement, and the better prepared, when our call comes, to meet our God.

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the  
 2. various methods of determining the rate of reaction.  
 3. The second part is devoted to a discussion of the  
 4. various methods of determining the order of reaction.  
 5. The third part is devoted to a discussion of the  
 6. various methods of determining the activation energy.  
 7. The fourth part is devoted to a discussion of the  
 8. various methods of determining the equilibrium constant.  
 9. The fifth part is devoted to a discussion of the  
 10. various methods of determining the rate of reaction.

## BOOK II.



## BOOK II.

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### CHAPTER I.

OF THE ADVENT OF THE GOSPEL TO SAMARIA,  
AND OF THE APPEARANCE OF ST. PHILIP, ONE  
OF THE SEVEN, IN A NEW CHARACTER.

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. . . . Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.”—ACTS viii. 1, 4, 5.

WITH the history of St. Philip the Evangelist commences a new stage in the development of the Christian Church. In the commission which had been given to the Twelve in Our Lord's lifetime, and which was executed (as we may say) under His eye, the Apostles had been strictly restrained from carrying the glad tidings of the kingdom of God to others than the Jews. In

St. Matthew's account of the original appointment of the Apostles we read, "These twelve  
" Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, *Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and*  
"*into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:*  
" but go rather unto the lost sheep of the house  
" of Israel." This restriction, however, had been formally cancelled in the new commission which was given previously to the Ascension. The barriers which had confined the advance of God's messengers in the former commission were then thrown down; and Samaria first, and after Samaria the whole world, were thrown open to the invasion of the Gospel. "Ye shall  
" receive power," said the ascending Saviour, "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you;  
" and ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in  
" Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, *and in Samaria,*  
" and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

It has been well observed that these words, which are found at the opening of the Acts, sketch out a plan of that treatise. At first the Apostles bear their testimony in Jerusalem. The martyrdom of St. Stephen disperses, not indeed the Apostles, but those disciples who had received the testimony from them, through Judæa and Samaria. "They were all scattered

"abroad, throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the Apostles." The Apostles personally, it seems, remained in the sacred metropolis, probably to form a nucleus for the society of believers, and a body of inspired referees, to whom the question which might arise in the various parts of the Christian world might be brought for solution. The sending forth of colonies is an evidence of vitality in the mother country, as well as of means of spreading national institutions; but there must be a settled home government in the mother country, otherwise her strength will be wasted and weakened by colonization. On this principle the Apostles had their residence for some years after the ascension at Jerusalem, occasionally making missionary tours, but returning after such tours to the metropolis, to constitute what may be called the home government of the Church. Probably they founded their authority for so doing in the parting charge of their Master, from which we have already quoted; "Being assembled together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me." This might

taken to imply no more than that they should remain in the capital, till they were qualified for their world-wide mission by the descent of the Holy Ghost. But, for whatever reasons, they seem to have understood it as prescribing a much longer regular residence in Jerusalem; for how else, unless they had done so, shall we account for the ancient tradition<sup>1</sup> that the Lord had bidden the Apostles

<sup>1</sup> "We are told by Apollonius, an author of the second century . . . . that there was a tradition (and a tradition of such a date must be received with the utmost respect) that the Saviour gave commandment to the Apostles not to leave Jerusalem till after twelve years from His ascension [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* V. c. 18]; and Eusebius goes so far as to say, that during the whole forty years which elapsed between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem, the greater part of the disciples, together with James the Bishop, still continued there, God affording it this advantage in the hope that it would even yet repent and be saved. [Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* III. c. 7.] Moreover, the same tradition of Apollonius is recorded in the 'Preaching of Peter,' a document certainly in existence in the beginning of the second century, or about A.D. 123; the passage to this effect quoted also from it by Clemens Alexandrinus, in the accuracy of the substance of it thus deriving a further sanction from him."—*Blunt's Church in the first three Centuries*. Murray, 1856. Pp. 43, 44.

And again (p. 45) "It might seem that it was for this very purpose they (the Apostles) were directed to remain so long a time stationary and united, that it was a part of the Divine Economy, and one which may supply a hint to ourselves as to the most successful method of dispersing the Gospel, to

stay twelve years in Jerusalem? Their witnessing to Him in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth, might be fulfilled, they probably thought, by their representatives. At all events, in the Providence of God, so it turned out. It was reserved for one of those, whom they had admitted by imposition of hands to a lower grade of ministry, to be the first who, after Christ Himself, should preach Christ in Samaria, and the first, too, who should be the means of sending the Gospel into the vast continent of Africa. And it was reserved for one

“establish a basis for further operations before any commencement of the work was attempted; to concentrate a force which, by degrees, might make itself felt at the extremities; to kindle at the focus of religious affairs a fire of such intensity and strength as would radiate readily to a distance.”

Of course the command to “wait” [at Jerusalem] “for the promise of the Father,” did not in the least imply (even in the modern idiom, much less in the Scriptural) that after the promise was fulfilled they were no longer to wait there. Had it been phrased thus; “Do not depart from Jerusalem UNTIL you receive the promise of the Father;” even this (in Scriptural idiom) would have implied nothing as to their line of conduct *after* the fulfilment. For *until* or *till*, in the phraseology of the inspired writers, simply means *up to a certain point of time*, and does not except or exclude what is to come after. See this illustrated in Pearson on the Creed, Art. III. p. 304, 305. Oxford. 1833. “When Samuel had delivered a severe prediction unto Saul, he *came no more to see him until the day of his death*: but it were a strange collection, to infer that “he therefore gave him a visit after he was dead,” &c. &c.

who was an Apostle born out of due time, and had no connexion with the original Twelve, to execute Our Lord's commission to its very fullest extent, and to carry the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. When the narrative of the Acts has brought St. Paul to Rome, that great metropolis which, Briareus-like, stretched out a hundred hands to clutch and retain in her grasp all the most distant provinces of the then known earth, the sketch of the execution of Our Lord's world-wide commission is then complete, and the sacred historian lays down the pen which he has wielded with such grace as well as such truth.

St. Philip the Evangelist, whose career we now enter upon, seems to have been the forerunner of St. Paul in his work, as St. Stephen had been in his preaching. "Coming events," it is said, "cast their shadows before," and it seems to have been ordained that the doctrine and work of St. Paul should have a prelude in the ministry of two out of those seven officers, whom the Apostles had appointed to relieve them of their lower and less spiritual cares. The forms of Stephen and Philip, projected on the canvas of the sacred history, give us some

notion of the gigantic figure in reserve, who, when he makes his appearance and begins to run his race, is to fasten all eyes upon himself.

What moved St. Philip to go down to Samaria with the Gospel message is not recorded. Perhaps the persecution which arose about Stephen was specially directed against him. In the list of the seven, which is given in Acts vi., his name comes next to that of Stephen, perhaps because he was specially associated with the martyr, perhaps only because he ranked next to him as a man of mark and energy of character. The name (like Stephen's) is a Greek one, and in all probability he, like Stephen, was one of those Hellenists or Grecized Jews, who had imbibed with the Greek language Greek associations and ideas, wider and more liberal than those of the Jews of Palestine. Hence he might be singled out by Stephen's murderers as a mark for special opposition, and might be disposed to seek shelter among the Samaritans, themselves the constant objects of Jewish aversion and contempt.

He went down, it appears, to a city of Samaria (for the definite article which appears in the

English version is not represented in the original), a city of the district or province called Samaria,—it might be the metropolis of the province, then called Sebaste (the Greek equivalent of Augusta), in compliment to the Emperor Augustus, who had made a grant of the city to Herod the Great; or it might be (and one likes to think that it was) Sychem or Sychar, the very city which Our Blessed Lord had honoured with a visit, and where he had held a famous conversation with a woman of Samaria at Jacob's well.

The orderliness of the spread of the Gospel both in Our Lord's design, and in the execution of that design, should be carefully attended to. It was to begin from Jerusalem as its centre, and first to permeate Judæa, the province of which Jerusalem was the metropolis; it was thence to advance to Samaria, the contiguous province, and not till it had been planted in Samaria, was the banner of the Cross to pass on, and be unfolded in the uttermost parts of the earth. Now this collocation of Samaria (between Judæa and the uttermost parts of the earth) is not so much to be understood geographically as morally or spiritually.

And this leads us to say a few words on the

religious position and character of the people, to whom St. Philip brought the Gospel. The Samaritans, then, may be roughly described as Judaized Gentiles, just as the Hellenists, of whom we have previously spoken, were a sort of Gentilized Jews. And it is obvious that Judaized Gentiles, in the good providence of God, might play the very same part which the Hellenists played — might act as a bridge between Judaism and heathenism, by which the Gospel might pass over from one to the other. The Samaritans were, in all probability, purely heathen<sup>2</sup> by extraction. They were the descendants of those heathens with whom Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, had colonized and re-peopled the desolated country of the ten tribes, and they are described as having been originally emigrants “from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and “from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sephar-vaim.” The seventeenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings gives the early history of these emigrants, which is certainly a remarkable one.

<sup>2</sup> See a long and most valuable note, proving this, in Abp. Trench’s *Book on the Parables*, pp. 299, 300 of Ed. 2, 1844. The Archbishop says that the mistake of supposing the Samaritans to have had Jewish blood in them is quite of recent origin. “Our Lord calls the grateful Samaritan ἀλλογενής” (Luke xvii. 18), one of a different stock.”

They desecrated the holy land, as heathens might be expected to do, by motley forms of idolatry, differing according to the cities from which they came. This desecration (and it is a great lesson that even material things, which stand in connexion with God, like the building and the furniture of a church, the volume of the Scriptures, and still more the elements of the Holy Sacrament, have a certain sacredness which we cannot violate without sin) was not allowed to go without a mark of the Divine displeasure. The country had been laid entirely desolate, swept clean of all its inhabitants, according to the policy which oriental invaders sometimes adopted, or, to use the homely and vigorous image which the prophets employed in denoting a similar catastrophe, "wiped as a man wipeth a dish, wiping "it and turning it upside down." One natural result of this total evacuation would be, that the beasts of the field would multiply and roam amongst the ruins of the cities. These beasts the Almighty made ministers of Divine vengeance. The country of the new colonists was infested with lions, who came up from the reedy jungles that lined the banks of the Jordan. When some of their number had fallen a prey

to these beasts, the colonists bethought them of the cause of the visitation. It was a sign that the God, who had taken the soil under His protection, was displeased with them for their neglect of His worship. To remedy this error, they applied to the king of Assyria to send them a Jewish priest, who might instruct them in the observances of the worship of Jehovah. These observances they adopted, and ever afterwards retained, although the sacred writer takes care to inform us that Jehovah was but one of many deities whom they acknowledged, and that the true religion was placed by them side by side with their national idolatries. When the Jews, under Ezra, returned from the seventy years' captivity, and set themselves to rebuild the temple, these people proposed to join them in the work, on the plea that having received the worship of Jehovah, they were co-religionists, and of the same communion. The offer was rejected with disdain ; and the affront of this rejection caused a rupture which down to the time of Our Lord and His Apostles was never healed.

The corrupt religion of the Samaritans soon found for itself a local habitation and a name. Manasseh, the son of a Jewish high priest,

being threatened with expulsion from the priesthood for contracting marriage with a Samaritan lady, permanently sided with them, and obtained permission from the Persian King of his day, or (according to Josephus's account of the matter) from Alexander the Great, to build a rival temple to that of Jerusalem on Mount Gerizim, and to found a rival priesthood. In connexion with this temple and priesthood was a sacred book called the Samaritan Pentateuch, which now exists, and the date of which is the subject of much controversy. It is a copy of the Law of Moses and of that only, showing, however, many alterations and interpolations of the text, and one notable falsification of it, introduced to give countenance to the pretensions of the new temple. In the passage where Moses commands the people, on their entrance into the promised land, to build an altar on Mount Ebal, the word *Ebal* was erased, and *Gerizim* substituted. Thus the Samaritan religion was a spurious, debased, and mutilated Judaism. And hence it followed, upon principles which have often been exemplified in history, that the antipathy of the Jews to the Samaritans exceeded their antipathy to mere Gentiles. Nothing do men hate more than a

caricature of themselves. Those who simply set our position and our privileges at nought may be tolerated, and regarded with nothing more than contempt; but pretenders to our position and privileges are counted worthy of execration. Accordingly the Samaritans were cursed in the public worship of the Jewish synagogue; no Samaritan could be admitted as a witness in a Jewish court of justice; nor could a Samaritan become, as we know that numberless mere Gentiles did, a proselyte either of the gate or of the covenant. And when the bitterest venom of the Jewish heart flung itself forth against Our Lord, this was its utterance; "Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, "and hast a devil?" Even the Apostle of love thought that a simple refusal of hospitality to Christ, coming from Samaritan villagers, might be righteously visited by calling down fire from heaven upon the churlish heretics.

These rancorous prejudices were of course entirely foreign to the spirit and temper of Our Blessed Lord. He took every opportunity of counteracting them in the minds of His disciples. He marked out for special notice and commendation the Samaritan who had turned back to express gratitude for his recovery from leprosy.

By one of His greatest parables, He has made the word "good Samaritan" a sort of proverb in Christendom for a kind-hearted, pitiful, beneficent man. And there are few more interesting passages in the Gospels than that which records His interview with the simple-minded though sinful woman of Samaria, and His two days' stay in the city of which she was an inhabitant.

But while He eschews and forbids all animosity towards Samaritans, and indeed favourably contrasts them with the Jews in point of moral and spiritual character, He gave no sanction whatever to their religious claims or their ecclesiastical position—an indication, by the way, of the spirit in which His Church should deal with those who reject her discipline, and set up a ministry in rivalry to hers. His personal mission being only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, His Apostles during His lifetime were expressly forbidden to enter into any city of the Samaritans. And an evident disparagement is thrown on Samaritan worship by His words to the woman at the well; "Ye worship ye know not what;" (a wonderfully precise way of describing the vague conceptions of acceptable worship in which

Samaritanism had commenced, and the motley group of deities which it had originally recognized;) "we know what we worship; for salvation" (literally *the* salvation predicted by the Prophets, and wrapped up in the Person of the Messiah) "is from the Jews." How clear is it from these words, and from the rest of the interview, that a man's religious position may be fundamentally wrong, even when in his tone, temper, and character there is more that is open, and candid, and generous than is often to be found amongst the rigid sticklers for orthodoxy.

Enough has been said to show that a strict Jew of the high orthodox school would have had a vast deal of prejudice to surmount in carrying to Samaria the tidings of the kingdom of God and the gracious offers of the Gospel. But Philip the Evangelist did not belong to this school. He was one of seven officers appointed in the interests of the Hellenist section of the Church, and probably was himself a Hellenist or Grecized Jew, possibly (like Timotheus) of Greek extraction on one side. His circumstances, his position, and his office would all give him wider sympathies than were to be found among Pharisees and Hebrews of the Hebrews. And it seems to have been arranged with the providential

design of overcoming Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans, that Our Blessed Lord had resided in Samaria two days, and had exercised His ministry successfully towards the Samaritans. The Divine Sower Himself had cast in the good seed there, and the blade had immediately sprung up; for we read that "many of the Samaritans believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did;" that the request to Him to tarry with them emanated from themselves, and that, as the fruit of His compliance with their request, "many more believed because of His own word." And it was actually intimated by Him on that occasion that He was then sowing a harvest which, when it had come to maturity, His Apostles should reap; "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours;" words which received a literal fulfilment when, after the labours, first of Himself and then of St. Philip the Evangelist, the Apostles Peter and John were summoned from Jerusalem to lay hands on the converted and baptized Samaritans, and to confer upon them the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

As for the original Diaconate, or rather the form in which the Diaconate originally subsisted, that seems to have been necessarily broken up by the persecution which dispersed the members of the Christian community. There was no more an organized Church at Jerusalem; only the rulers of the Church remained at their posts. Philip, though he had been appointed to be a distributor of Church alms, and to preside at the love-feasts of the Christians in Jerusalem, now appears in a new character, the exigencies of the times no longer requiring those functions. We know him only as an Evangelist or missionary, not as a Deacon or stationary officer of the Church. A striking proof that the wisest plans for Church Government must be subject to modifications by the Providence of God, and that ecclesiastical discipline was not meant to crystallize rigidly in one set shape, but to adapt itself to the exigencies of society and the wants of the times.—Yet while the form of the early Diaconate passed away, its principle remained, and extended itself to other Churches. We hear of deacons at Philippi, and of a gift of “helps” in the Church of Corinth, which probably was a sort of qualification for the Deacon’s office. It was soon found every where that the strictly

spiritual offices of the Ministry were more than enough to devolve on one man, and that the care of the poor and sick must be entrusted to subordinate functionaries. But as poverty and sickness offer obvious opportunities for impressing religious truth, it was felt, and felt truly, by the Church of the first ages, that the Deacon must be a minister, and must receive a lower grade of Ordination. Accordingly, we have even in the present day an order of Deacons, whose function it is, according to the theory of the English Church, "to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, unto the Curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved with the alms<sup>3</sup> of the Parishioners or others." At the same time the Deacon is to assist the Priest in Divine Service, to help him in the distribution of the Holy Communion, and to preach when licensed to do so. Thus the early idea of the office is not lost, though the altered state of society makes it necessary that the idea should be embodied in a different shape.

One word, in concluding this chapter, on the gradual expansion of the Christian Church, and on the slow development, even in the minds of

<sup>3</sup> *The Form and Manner of Making of Deacons.*

Christ's chosen servants, of the ideas which were to form a Christendom, and to regenerate human society. The Church, we find, had much to learn after Pentecost, and, as she came in contact with new forms of sin and error, had to throw herself into new shapes, and assume new lines of defence. Experience and struggle were to teach her many a lesson, which could not otherwise than through experience and struggle have been communicated. For we shall entirely mistake the nature of the Pentecostal outpouring, if we imagine it to have been a magic enlightenment on all points of truth, and not rather the implantation of a principle of light and love, which, once implanted, was to work out its results according to the laws of the human mind. The descent of the Holy Spirit did not supersede growth in wisdom and in grace: on the contrary, it initiated growth. Placed under the guidance of that Spirit, the views of the Apostles became gradually clearer and wider, and truth after truth was revealed to their apprehension. Pentecost did for the society very much what sincere conversion does for the individual. Conversion is a period of warm and lively emotions, of first glimpses into saving truth, of joy in anticipations of a future blessedness. And those

who know not the heart, often imagine that, when these impressions are first made upon it, the whole work of sanctification is finished. Finished ! it is but begun. Our young strength has to be approved by trial, and our little knowledge to be wonderfully enlarged by experience. We have to learn a thousand painful and humiliating lessons of our own weakness before we can be brought to depend simply on that strength of Christ, which in weakness, and in the sense of weakness, is made perfect. Many folds lie yet upon the Truth, which, in the course of our Christian education, are to be lifted up one after another. It may seem hard that God should thus delay the consummation of the Christian, and should not hasten his departure to a happier clime. But let it be considered that growth is uniformly a condition of life, and that the capacity of growth—intellectual growth and spiritual growth—is an indication of man's greatness. There is no life in nature without growth, and it is man's power of moral and mental growth which distinguishes him from the beasts that perish. Then let it be our aim to grow daily in grace and in the knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour. This growth will always involve a struggle with

constitutional disorders, will often be humbling, often painful. But if a sure and solid advance be realized in the knowledge of self, in the knowledge of God, in control of the will, in general discipline of the character, what are all the trials incidental to growth but light affliction, which is but for a moment—affliction which worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? The God of all grace, after that we have suffered awhile, shall make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GENUINE AND SPURIOUS MIRACLES.

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."—ACTS viii. 5—13.

THE undesigned coincidences which an attentive reader may detect in Holy Scripture are one most satisfactory evidence of its truth. The passage before us furnishes one of these coincidences.

From the account of Our Lord's sojourn in Sychar, which is given by St. John, a writer very different in character and circumstances from St. Luke, we gather that the Samaritans were a simple-minded, unprejudiced people, and that they were looking for the Messiah. The woman betrays the prevalent expectation in those words of hers; "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things." And no less does she betray openness of mind and freedom from prejudice in gathering Our Lord's Messiahship from the knowledge He had evinced of her history. He had done no miracle before her; but His accurate representation of her past fortunes was quite sufficient to convince her of the truth of the pretensions which He made. So much was she taken up with the marvel of His preternatural knowledge, that she forgot the errand on which she had come to the well; "she left her waterpot, and" (with her eyes, doubtless, full of wonder) "she went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" The inhabitants generally manifest the same simplicity and receptivity of mind. It is not said that Our Lord wrought a single

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miracle among them ; His discourse sufficed to bring them to a true conclusion regarding Him, a conclusion in which they recognize His relation, not to the Jews only, but to all mankind ; “ Many of them said unto the “ woman, Now we believe, not because of thy “ saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and “ know that this is indeed the Christ, *the “ Saviour of the world.*” It may also be noticed that conscience does not seem to have been very much on the alert in this woman. Her moral sense is not highly developed, although she is an open-minded, unprejudiced person. Christ tried to reach her conscience by showing His knowledge of her present immoral life ; but that knowledge only strikes her with wonder, not with conviction. She does not blush or utter a note of penitence, but immediately wanders off to the controversial topic at issue between her own people and the Jews, as if to ascertain His opinion upon it—“ Sir, I perceive that “ thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped “ in this mountain ; and ye say, that in “ Jerusalem is the place where men ought to “ worship.”

Judging from these specimens of them, the Samaritans seem to have been simple-minded

people, with a sort of childlike taste for the marvellous, and an equally childlike credulity, keenly anticipating the coming of a great Prophet and Deliverer, but having the moral faculties imperfectly developed. Now it is exactly among such a people that sorcery and magic might be expected to make way. And the passage before us states expressly that these arts had made way among them. And thus the Samaritans of the Acts are true to the character incidentally ascribed to them in St. John's Gospel, though it is a coincidence which lies so very far from the surface of the two narratives, that it would be absurd to think of any collusion between the writers.

Not among the Samaritans only, however, but among nations in a much higher state of civilization, there seems to have been prevalent, about the time of the appearance of the Gospel, a general susceptibility to magical arts. The explanation of this phenomenon is easy. The religious ideas of mankind were in a state of fermentation, and the religious mind of Gentiles as well as Jews was in a state of high excitement. A general expectation prevailed throughout the world of the advent of a great Ruler. It was partly due no doubt to the dissemination,

of Jewish ideas and associations, which had been brought about in the Providence of God by Israel's captivity and dispersion. But there was something more than this in it. The mythologies of the heathen and all forms of false religion had become effete, and ceased to have any hold upon the mind of nations who had attained any degree of civilization. All men must have some religion; and so intelligent and educated heathens held on to the old forms with an occasional sneer, and more than an occasional suspicion, for want of a better; but they yearned for something truer, deeper, more satisfying. Pagan religions were fast undergoing a decomposition; every where the minds of men were prepared for a change. Now this feverish, unsettled state of religious ideas is connected in the human mind with credulity, with an appetite for signs and wonders. In such a state of mind there is a demand for the marvellous, and wherever there is a demand there is sure to be a supply. And, to go beyond the phenomena to the real causes that underlie them, there can be no question that by the manifestation of God in the flesh, of whose Person, power, and designs of mercy the Devil seems to have gained a gradual inkling—the powers of evil

were stirred up to make a desperate effort for the maintenance of their supremacy over mankind. Demoniactal possession, which appears on the page of Holy Scripture contemporaneously with Christ and His Apostles, was one result of this effort. A great swarm of enthusiasts and impostors, who, by their magical arts, gained a wide influence even in Rome itself, was another. Apollonius of Tyana, a Pythagorean philosopher of severely ascetic life, who was born three or four years before Our Lord, is said to have performed divers miracles which are parodies of those in the Gospels. He claimed, like Christ, to be a divine legislator and a reformer of the world; and though much of his history is evidently fabulous, it is clear that he must have attained a great celebrity, and wielded a real and extensive power over the minds of men, such as no pretender to magic could, in the temper of the present times, for one moment establish. Indeed, Our Lord had predicted that there should arise "false Christs and false prophets, and should show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." And so it turned out. By the side of the genuine coin which God minted, and which had His

image and superscription upon it, were issued from the mint of the Devil a whole shoal of counterfeit coins. The economy of the Gospel was to fare as the economy of the Law had fared before it. The commission of Moses was attested by great signs and wonders, by the ten plagues of Egypt, and by the magnificent passage through the Red Sea. But the sorcerers and magicians wrought the same wonders with Moses up to a certain point. They, too, changed their rods into serpents; they turned water into blood; they brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt. But here their power ceased, and on witnessing the next sign, which they tried in vain to simulate, they said unto Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." We have now before us the parallel passage of New Testament history. The Gospel comes for the first time athwart magical arts. The magician is forced to yield to it, and acknowledge that God is in it of a truth. He is baptized (though without any real change of heart), and professes discipleship from conviction, though not from conversion.

A whole romance of marvels has been spun out of the history of Simon Magus. He is regarded by the Christian Fathers as the great

heretic<sup>1</sup> of heretics, the very impersonation of every thing erroneous in teaching and presumptuous in claim. But all that is authentic about him is to be gathered from this passage of St. Luke. The Samaritans were in the habit of calling angels "powers of God" (a phraseology, indeed, which the Scriptures sanction in such passages as "angels and authorities and powers" "being made subject unto Him," &c.). To this man, in amaze at his magical achievements, they gave the title of "the power of God, which is called" "great or supreme." In short, they regarded him as a sort of incarnation of the highest power in the Deity. That he magnified himself to the extent of the most audacious blasphemy, may be gathered from several passages in the Fathers. Justin tells us that "almost all the Samaritans, and a few also among other nations, acknowledged" and worshipped him as the first<sup>2</sup> God;" while Irenæus implies that he recognized a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and claimed to be

<sup>1</sup> Thus Irenæus (Lib. i., ch. 30); "All who in any way adulterate the truth, and injure the Church's testimony, are disciples and successors of Simon the Samaritan sorcerer."

<sup>2</sup> Καὶ σχεδὸν πάντες μὲν Σαμαρεῖς, ὀλίγοι δὲ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις ἔθνεσιν, ὡς τὸν πρῶτον Θεὸν ἐκείνον ὁμολογοῦντες, ἐκείνον καὶ προσκυνοῦσι. Just. Mart., *Apol. II., Opera.* Lutetiæ, 1615. P. 69, D.

himself an incarnation of all of them, and to have appeared among the Samaritans as the Father<sup>3</sup>, among the Jews as the Son, and among people of other religions as the Holy Ghost. Allowing for exaggeration in this description of his claims, one quite sees how they illustrate St. Luke's inspired account of him, that "he gave out himself to be some great "one," and that the people, accepting him (as they have accepted many other false pretenders) on his own valuation, said that he was "the "power of God, which is called great." Whatever wonders he may himself have wrought, and whatever may have been the secret of his power, whether it was purely natural, or in virtue of some contract with the Evil One, Simon confessed himself outdone by the miracles of the Gospel. To gain power and influence, and

<sup>3</sup> After mentioning that the Emperor Claudius had honoured him with a statue on account of his proficiency in magic, Irenæus goes on to say: "He then was glorified as God "by many, and taught that it was himself, who among the "Jews indeed appeared as the Son, but in Samaria had come "down as the Father, and among other nations came as the "Holy Ghost. He gave out that he was the loftiest of all "powers (*esse se sublimissimam virtutem*), or in other words, "He who is the Father over all things; and he tolerated "men's bestowing on himself any title which they gave to that "supreme Father." (Iren. *adv. Hær.*, B. i. ch. 20.)

probably money, by thaumaturgy (or works of wonder) was his profession ; but he found himself eclipsed in the practice of it. His policy then seems to have been, without at all relinquishing the one object of his life, to ascertain the secret of this new power, and to possess himself of it. The first step towards this attainment seemed to him to be his submission to that Ordinance which, when received with right dispositions of heart, brings men into communion with Christ. There can be little doubt that he regarded Baptism as a sort of magical incantation, and placed it, in his own mind, on a level with his own spells. Probably some renunciation of his magical arts would be previously required of him, or, at all events, such renunciation would be considered as implied in his application for the Sacrament. It was not for Philip to make the gate of admission to the kingdom of Heaven narrower than his Master had made it ; and Jesus, in giving the Baptismal Commission, had said ; “ He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved.” Simon believed this much at least, that the name of Jesus was more potent than his own spells, and that the message of the Gospel, which Philip preached, was authenticated by God’s own

finger. Accordingly, on the profession of this faith, he was baptized. But there appears in him not a trace of real conversion, however strong may have been his convictions. We hear of no searchings of the conscience, no surrender of the will, of nothing but amazement and dumbfoundedness. And it is observable that St. Luke, in describing his state of mind while beholding the miracles of the Gospel, should use the same Greek word which he has already employed in describing the effect of Simon's own powers on the multitude; "He bewitched (*ἐξίσταω*) the people of Samaria . . . and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and beholding the miracles and signs which were done, *he* was bewitched (*ἐξίστατο*)."

Let us note now (for the doing so will be instructive) some of the characteristics of St. Philip's miracles, which distinguished them from those of the sorcerer. We may say then, generally, that Philip's miracles had upon them the twofold seal which those of the sorcerer lacked—the seal of God's glory, and the seal of love to man.

1. *The seal of God's glory.*—We are expressly told that the sorcerer put himself forward, preached himself, fastened the eyes of the

people upon his wonders, and their minds upon his extravagant claims ;—"he gave out that "himself was some great one." Whereas of St. Philip it is said, in marked contrast, that "he preached *Christ* unto them," that "he preached *the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.*" He announced that a kingdom which was righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, was set up upon the Earth ; that the Devil's empire over the bodies and souls of men was broken by Christ's work of Atonement and Mediation ; and that whosoever would come to God in penitence and faith might have the full benefit of these priceless blessings. Miracles of a corresponding character were wrought to attest this message. In evidence that the Devil's moral empire was broken, "unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, "came out of many that were possessed with "them." In evidence that a power had come into humanity, which could enable man to surmount his moral impotence, and infuse new energy into his will, "many taken with palsies, "and that were lame, were healed." On the sight of these miracles, we are told, joy was stirred in the hearts of the people. But how was this? A mere wonder has no apti-

tude to produce joy. Simon's sorceries produced no joy, but only amazement and superstitious dread. What produced in the people emotions of joy, was the glad tidings which Philip had brought to them, and which the miracles confirmed. Instead of giving heed to Simon and his pretensions, as heretofore, "they gave heed to THE THINGS WHICH PHILIP SPAKE" (i. e., to the Gospel message), "hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." Not but that the miracles themselves (like all that God does) were beautiful and beneficent things, which lifted up to Heaven the souls of those who witnessed them in a devout spirit, and wakened up from many a poor patient in Samaria a chorus of praise and thanksgiving. Where miracles redound, by many thanksgivings, unto the praise of God, we may believe that they had their origin from God, like streams which have their rise in the great reservoir of the earth's waters, and return into that reservoir again. But when they redound only to the glorification of man, and swell the chorus of adulation which is offered to some popular favourite, we may altogether suspect them. What returns to man in the way of adulation, generally took its rise from man in the way of display.

2. St. Philip's miracles, like those of his Master, had impressed upon them *the seal of love to man*. They were miracles which brought relief to suffering humanity, to the possessed in the first instance, then to the sick and the disabled. If God is good, if His heart is a fountain of pity, if He is, even to undutiful children, a most tender and compassionate Father, these are just the miracles which might be expected from Him, when He departs from His ordinary method of working. But not a word is said of any beneficent character in Simon's miracles. They conferred no benefits on mankind; they were simply wonders that bewitched simple folk—threw them into an ecstasy of amazement and alarm. It is true indeed (and it may suggest itself to some as deserving of notice in this connexion), that there are sundry divine miracles recorded in the Old Testament, whose first aspect is certainly not that of love to man. The plagues of Egypt strike us as miracles of judgment, and as being works of power rather than of mercy. But on closer consideration of this subject it will be seen that in every such miracle of judgment there has been a design of mercy, if not towards those *on* whom, yet towards those *among* whom, it was wrought; that the sharp punish-

ment of offenders is, in Divine as well as in human administration, sometimes the greatest mercy to society; and that, as regards the miracles of the Exodus in particular, while they were sore chastisements to the enemies of God, they were the salvation of His chosen people, and are on that account recited in a Psalm, the constantly recurring burden of which is, "for His "mercy endureth for ever;" a clause which sounds strangely after such a statement as "He smote "Egypt with their firstborn," but which finds its explanation in the fact that judgment to a persecuting world is often mercy to a persecuted Church. And as to the general character of Old Testament miracles, it was in every way necessary that they should be sterner, should have more of the element of power, and less of that of mercy, than those of the Gospel. For Scripture miracles are signs, and are constructed so as to correspond in character with, and be significant of, the doctrine they attest. Now, as the Law worketh wrath, it would have been unsuitable to the economy of the Law to accompany it exclusively with miracles of mercy.

Two practical observations arise from the

subject which has engaged our attention in this chapter.

1. True and divine miracles are never shown for their own sake, but purely for the sake of some doctrine or revelation, which has to be attested by them. They are never advanced as curiosities to make people wonder, but as signs to make them believe. Hence, as soon as the doctrine or revelation has gained itself a firm footing, the miracles, which are purely subordinate to its establishment, cease. When the Law was promulgated from Heaven, there was a grand outburst of miracles, which both preceded and succeeded its delivery; but as soon as the people were established in the promised land, the miracles gradually fell off, till, in the time of David and the Kings, we scarcely hear of any of them. When the Gospel was introduced into the fallen world, it was accompanied with a galaxy of miracles, which however waned by degrees, as those on whom the Apostles had laid their hands died off, and Christianity had established itself in the convictions of men. John the Baptist himself never worked a miracle, one of the reasons of which may be, that he had no substantially new message to deliver; that the repentance which he urged,

the kingdom which he announced as at hand, the Messiah to whom he pointed, had been previously urged, announced, predicted.

Then do not imagine that God will hereafter depart from the principles on which miraculous manifestations have hitherto been vouchsafed. Not unless He has some weighty and substantial message, to which to call the attention of mankind, will He vary from His ordinary method of working. When marvels are bruited abroad, and professed to be wrought by some occult power, do not for a moment believe them to be from God, unless they are in confirmation of some message from Him of the weightiest import. The craving of some weak minds after communication with the spirits of the dead and other forms of the supernatural, has nothing to do with religion. Generally speaking, it is nothing more than that love of excitement which makes us discontented with this old hackneyed life, and craves for novelty at all hazards. It is true indeed that, as time goes on, new truths of science and new secrets of nature will be upturned; and the investigation of such truths will always be a subject of high interest to every intelligent mind; but all modern pretence of the supernatural (at least of the

Divine supernatural) may safely be dismissed, unless the pretender can show a new doctrine of real import to humanity, which the signs are brought to establish. If, without the allegation of any such doctrine, belief is now-a-days demanded in the supernatural, the claimant must be impaled upon one or other horn of a dilemma. Either he is an impostor, or else the source of his supernatural power is infernal. In either case, he is worthy of condign punishment.

2. Secondly; observe well the feature which has been pointed out in all true and divine miracles, —the correspondence of the character of the miracle with the doctrine which it is brought to establish. Thus, for example, the plagues of Egypt were all directed to establish the superiority of Jehovah to the idols of the Egyptians, and the folly of the various forms of Egyptian idolatry. This was the significance of turning the Nile into blood, and of sending a murrain upon the cattle, both the river and the cattle being objects of Egyptian worship; while the plague of locusts aimed a blow at the worship of Serapis, whose office was supposed to be the protection of the country from those insects; and the plague of darkness at that of Isis and Osiris, the representatives of the sun and moon,

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who were supposed to control the light and the elements. There can be little doubt that in all cases there was a correspondence between the truth to be impressed upon the mind, and the miracle which was destined to impress it.

Now, if this be a general principle of miraculous manifestations, what must we infer the Gospel doctrine to be from a general survey of the Gospel miracles? The very large majority of those miracles takes the form of relief to the afflicted mind or body of man. "Unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed." What an evidence that the Word so attested was, in any right view of it, an announcement of release from the worst sufferings under which humanity groans, an absolution, a spiritual cure, a glad tidings of great joy. Yes! wherever apprehended in simplicity of mind, as the Samaritans apprehended it, the Gospel is a message productive of great joy. Wherever it is not so received, wherever it is thought of merely as a more spiritual law, or an enactment of new restrictions and new observances, wherever it fails to alleviate care, to chase away sorrow, and to give a new spring of

energy to the will, there it is certainly misconceived and misapprehended. It announces a ransom as having been already effected for each soul which it visits, and it proffers to that soul a grace won for it by the payment of that ransom, quite independently of any merits or efforts of its own. To believe in such a ransom and such a grace, is to find peace and joy; instant relief of conscience, liberty of the will, and the hope of glory. It must be a message surpassingly good which was attested by the immediate and perfect relief of so many thousand poor sufferers. God give us that simple unquestioning faith in it which He vouchsafed to the Samaritans, and it shall be as productive of joy in our as it was in their city! **THERE WAS GREAT JOY IN THAT CITY.**

## CHAPTER III.

### THE APOSTLES' VISIT TO SAMARIA.

"Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me."—Acts viii. 14—24.

WE consider this passage as belonging to the history of St. Philip the Evangelist, because the incidents recorded in it have such a living connexion with him that it is impossible to separate

them from him. It was his success in Samaria which prepared the way for the visit and the higher ministry of the Apostles. It was he who had baptized the sorcerer Simon, who here appears in such sharp antagonism to the Apostles. But it is instructive to notice how St. Philip himself is thrown into the background on the appearance of St. Peter and St. John ; how the sacred narrative thenceforth observes a complete reticence as to his work in Samaria. Like John the Baptist before Our Lord, Philip withdraws behind the scenes when the two Apostles come upon the stage. There is something very touching in this willingness to be eclipsed, which it were an injustice to the character of the Evangelist to pass over. Philip might have naturally felt that he had borne the burden and heat of the day in Samaria, and that the success which the Apostles met with there was owing to their finding all things made ready to their hand. "*He had laboured*" (those words of Our Lord, uttered in connexion with his visit to the Samaritans, had reference probably to his ministry) "*and the Apostles entered into his labours.*" He had dug the soil, and thrown in the seed, and watered it, until the field was white to the harvest ; and now it remained only for St. Peter

and St. John to put in the sickle, and reap down the corn. Their doing so seems to have been watched by him without any of that grudging jealousy which mere nature under such circumstances must have prompted. There was a pure disinterestedness in these early missionaries, which has been rarely witnessed since their days. Philip's aim in his ministry was just the reverse of Simon's aim in his sorcery. The latter sought popularity and influence for himself; the former sought to attract men to the Saviour. And, accordingly, any increase in the knowledge, any confirmation in the faith of the Saviour, was to Philip a matter of pure joy, because he sought the people's souls, and not their suffrages. St. Paul, when he heard in captivity of his own Gospel being taken out of his mouth, and disseminated by some with the spiteful design of arousing his jealousy, gave utterance to that noble sentiment; "Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice." And St. Philip had something in him of the spirit, as well as of the mission, of St. Paul. But only they who, in a field of honest, earnest labour for Christ, where they have won much influence, have been superseded by men of more

brilliant gifts, can appreciate the trial which our Evangelist must have undergone, and the grace which enabled him to surmount it.

The Apostles, who, as we have seen, wisely remained at Jerusalem, as a centre and rallying-point for the dispersed Christians, deputed two of their body to visit Samaria, and give the Apostolic sanction to the great work which was going on there. The two deputies were the foremost men of the whole college—St. Peter and St. John. As regards St. Peter, his official presence was probably required by the position which he held in Prophecy and in the Providence of God. His Lord had entrusted him with the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, indicating that he was to throw open the gates of the Gospel Dispensation to all men, first to the Jews, which he did on the day of Pentecost, and then to the Gentiles, which he did by the admission of Cornelius and his party to the Church. But standing midway between Jews and Gentiles, there was, as I have already stated, another sect of religionists, the Samaritans, more abhorred by the Jews than even the Gentiles themselves. The inveteracy of Jewish prejudices against this sect needed to be overcome in the minds of the

Jewish Christians; and there was no better way of overcoming it than by St. Peter's taking a journey to confirm the faith of the Samaritan converts, and to admit them, by imposition of hands, to the fullest privileges of Church membership. Here we see him, in fulfilment of his Lord's word, wielding the keys and throwing open the gate of the new Economy to the Samaritans, as he had previously done to the Jews, and was to do subsequently to the Gentiles.

St. John is constantly associated with him in the early chapters of the Acts, and it is not therefore surprising that St. John should have accompanied him on this occasion. But it is certainly a striking coincidence, if it be nothing more, that one of the two Apostles who, in Our Lord's lifetime, had given vent to the prevailing feeling of hostility against Samaritans, and had suggested that fire should be called down from Heaven upon the inhabitants of a Samaritan village, should have been selected, now that a better and more loving spirit had taken possession of his heart, to call down upon the Samaritans the fire, not of judgment, but of God's illuminating and enkindling grace. The descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost had made new men of the Apostles, and of John among the

rest; had softened his asperities, had enlarged his sympathies, and had made him willing to invoke a blessing where he had once longed to invoke a judgment.

The act of the Apostles at Samaria forms the Scriptural ground for the rite of Confirmation. The outward shape which this Ordinance now wears among ourselves, has been given to it by the Church, and has been determined no doubt by modern needs; but the germ of the Ordinance is in the passage before us. For we find here an invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the baptized, accompanied by imposition of hands, both invocation and imposition performed by the rulers of the Church, who are called in for the purpose, and evidently incapable of being performed (in this particular case) by others. It is often alleged that this imposition of hands was merely for the bestowal of miraculous gifts, such as now have ceased in the Church; but that these gifts were accompanied with an increase of grace is clear from the first instance of their bestowal at Pentecost. It will not be denied that after Pentecost the Apostles were filled with a zeal, a courage, and a spiritual insight to which they were previously strangers. And we are therefore led to believe that these moral and

spiritual effects uniformly followed all similar outpourings of the Holy Spirit. And as such moral and spiritual effects are unquestionably wrought upon the heart now-a-days, we do not think it meet to discontinue the outward sign with which in primitive times they were connected. And, moreover, as Baptism is in the nature of a contract, into which Christ enters with the soul, and the practice of *Infant* Baptism makes it almost a necessity to have some period at which a baptized child may consciously and of his own accord enter into this contract, it seems extremely suitable (to say the least of it) that when our children have come to such an age that they can make a stipulation for themselves, they should then receive the completion of Baptism, and the fulness of baptismal grace, by prayer and the imposition of hands. This imposition of hands, the same outward sign which is employed in Ordination, consecrates, as it were, the baptized person to the royal<sup>1</sup> priesthood, which is the common prerogative of Christians, that he may offer up spiritual sacrifices ac-

<sup>1</sup> "The laying on of hands on all baptized persons is, as it were, a solemn consecration to the universal priesthood." (*Schaff's History of the Apostolic Church*, vol. ii. p. 275. Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1854.)

ceptable to God through Jesus Christ. It sets him apart solemnly, whatever be his secular pursuit, for the service of Christ and for the glory of God.

Yet, while we discover in Holy Scripture the germ of this Apostolic rite, and pronounce our Confirmations to be "after the example of the "holy Apostles," we do not regard them as having the universal necessity or the virtue of a Sacrament. We observe in the Acts of the Apostles that God occasionally vouchsafed the gift of the Holy Spirit independently of the laying on of the Apostles' hands. He did so previously to Baptism in the case of Cornelius and his party. He did so in the case of Saul of Tarsus ; for Ananias, who laid his hands upon him, was no Apostle ; and, moreover, the imposition of hands in this case was previously, not subsequently, to the baptism. He did so in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch, for surely it was in the power of God's Spirit that that man went on his way rejoicing ; and yet, by the necessity of the case, he can have received no imposition of the Apostles' hands. A candid study of every testimony of Holy Scripture will lead to the conclusion, maintained by our own Church, that Confirmation has its origin in the practice and example of the Apostles, while destitute of the

Divine institution and of the universal obligation which characterize a Sacrament in that high and peculiar sense to which our Church restrains<sup>2</sup> the word.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps I should not say that our Church "restrains" the word Sacrament to Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for all that is said in the Catechism is, that there are "two only Sacraments, *as generally necessary to salvation*;" and in Article XXV., "that there are two Sacraments *ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel*." I apprehend it would be quite consistent with the doctrine of our Church to hold other rites to be sacramental, or Sacraments of a lower grade and an imperfect character. This view is sanctioned by Bishop Harold Browne, no mean authority:—"This definition" (in the Twenty-fifth Article) "does not exclude matrimony, confirmation, absolution, and orders from being *in some sense* Sacraments; but it excludes them from being "*such* Sacraments as Baptism and the Communion.'" (Ed. 5, p. 582.)

I trust that the view taken above of the rite of Confirmation will approve itself to the reader. I cannot help regarding it as a rite which (when duly administered and duly received) is the means of conferring—not the regenerating, but—the fortifying influences of the Holy Ghost. So says Hooker:—"The Fathers every where impute unto it "that gift or grace of the Holy Ghost, *not which maketh us first Christian men*, but when we are made such, *assisteth us in all virtue, armeth us against temptation and sin*." (Ecc. Pol., B. v. ch. lxvi. 4.) The ground taken against Confirmation as a separate means of grace, is sometimes that the laying on of the Apostles' hands conferred the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, which have now ceased; sometimes, that the exceptions enumerated above clearly show that the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost were quite independent of

Once before had money been offered to St. Peter, in order to gain a fair reputation among (though sometimes annexed to) the laying on of the Apostles' hands. But, in the first place, is there not reason to think that a renewal of the Pentecostal outpouring followed the laying on of St. Peter's and St. John's hands, in Acts viii., and of St. Paul's hands in Acts xix. ? and would it not be clearly unscriptural to say that the Pentecostal outpouring conferred *only* miraculous gifts, not Grace ? And, in the second place, the exceptional cases are all very marked exceptions, and seem to me rather to prove than to invalidate the existence of an ordinary rule. The Eunuch was going into his own country, far out of the reach of the Apostles. The vouchsafing of the Holy Spirit in Cornelius's case, even previously to *Baptism*, was surely for the sake of inducing St. Peter not to withhold Baptism. And again at the time of Saul's baptism, no *Apostle* would have laid his hands on him. *God does not tie Himself to any means (even to Sacraments)* ; but we may not hence conclude that *we* are not tied to means, *where they may be had*. Thus I must beg leave to demur to M. Pressensé's conclusion (*Histoire du premier Siècle*, Paris, 1858, p. 399) : "Les partisans de la hiérarchie triomphent de ce fait" (that the Holy Ghost fell on the Samaritan neophytes in answer to the prayer of St. Peter and St. John) ; "mais, pour l'élever "à la hauteur d'un principe et d'une règle générale, il "faudrait prouver que jamais dans l'époque apostolique le "Saint-Esprit n'a choisi d'autre organe que les apôtres ou leurs "délégués immédiats ;" and to that of Dean Alford (*Homilies on Acts*, i.—x., Rivingtons, 1858, p. 246) : "Are we to "suppose that the Apostles went down to Samaria, to establish a rule for the Church, that such was to be the completion of the Sacrament of Baptism for all ages of the Church ? "I answer, Decidedly not." &c. If the laying on of Episcopal hands is found (as all agree) at a very early period in connexion with the Sacrament of Baptism, we may safely ask whence did this custom take its rise but from some practice

men. Ananias had laid down at Peter's feet part of the price of his property, wishing to have it understood as the whole. Simon Magus now lays money down at his feet (for the word translated "offered",<sup>3</sup> means offering in action

which the Apostles usually observed? The late Professor Blunt says (in his *History of the Church in the Three First Centuries*, p. 40), "That there was a form of Confirmation 'in the very beginning of the Church, is more than credible. 'The imposition of hands, and prayer for the Holy Ghost, 'which constitute the features of this Ordinance as administered by the Apostles Peter and John to the parties whom 'Philip the Deacon had baptized, are preserved and *assume the aspect of a fixed rite in Cyprian*, who grounds the 'practice of the Church in his own day on this Apostolical 'precedent, and speaks of those 'who had been baptized being 'presented to the prelates, that by their prayer and imposition of hands they might receive the Holy Ghost,' a mode 'of expression very consistent with an usage even then old 'and established."

"Imposition of hands" is reckoned by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews as among the "principles of the doctrine of Christ" (chap. vi. 1, 2); and surely we cannot help assenting to Mr. Sadler's comment upon this passage:—"As 'all the other five 'foundations' here enumerated have to 'do with matters with which each individual soul in the 'Church is personally and immediately concerned, we can 'hardly doubt but that this 'laying on of hands' refers primarily to a means of grace which belongs to each individual 'Christian, and so can be nothing else than what we call 'Confirmation, which is the only 'laying on of hands' in 'which all the baptized partake." (*Sadler's Church Doctrine, Bible Truth*, Bell and Daldy, 1865.)

<sup>3</sup> προσήνεγκεν αὐτοῖς χρήματα.

—he did not only propose upon certain terms to bring it, but actually brought it), in order to win, not merely a fair character, but power and influence. He had watched with great interest the miraculous effects which followed the laying on of the Apostles' hands, the casting out of devils, the speaking with new tongues, the healing powers which descended upon the new converts. This was just the secret he wanted in order to regain his lost influence over the minds of the simple-hearted Samaritans; the possession of the Apostles' power would enable him to eclipse Philip, who could only do miracles, not enable others to do them. He longed to be put in communication with the source of this power, which no doubt he regarded as magical rather than moral. It would be money well spent, he thought, if he could not only enchant people himself, but gain the secret of qualifying others to enchant them. So he brought a considerable portion of the gains of his trade, and pouring out the gold and silver before the Apostles, he said, "Give me also this power." It is to be remarked as a feature of the case, that what Simon coveted, was not the Holy Spirit, but the power of communicating the Spirit to others. And all that

he cared to communicate to others, was not the grace of the Spirit, but His gifts; not any moral or spiritual influence which might reach the consciences and touch the hearts of men, but the power of working miracles, which he had seen Philip exercise. And there can be little doubt that what he offered money *for*, he intended to win money *by*. If the Apostles would but communicate to him their secret, he thought he could make a lucrative trade of it. There is no trace in him, throughout the whole transaction, of any thing but the coarsest earthliness of mind, an immersion in secular interests, and a devotion to secular pelf. So that St. Peter's cutting reproof, and his insinuation of the difficulty of saving a character so far gone in evil ("Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if *perhaps* the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"), does not seem at all too strong for the occasion. Had there been a single stirring of conscience in Simon, a single aspiration after goodness, or even the faintest shadow of a desire for spiritual blessing, the rejoinder, while still it might have been in the tone of censure, would have been far more lenient. But the Lord had, in the hearing of His Apostles, spoken of a sin against

the Holy Ghost, which He solemnly declared to be unpardonable here and hereafter. It was the sin which the Pharisees committed in attributing His beneficent miracles to Satan. The miracles were done by the power of the Holy Ghost (which God gave without measure unto His Son), and were of such a character that, when taken in combination with the doctrine of Christ, they could leave no doubt on any candid mind of Our Lord's Divine mission. Those, therefore, who sinned in full view of such miracles, sinned against the Holy Ghost. And it seems to me that, when St. Peter is administering this reproof, the thought is working in his mind that Simon possibly had committed a sin of the same malignant kind, he having witnessed the Holy Ghost's miraculous attestations of the Gospel, but giving no trace whatever of conversion of heart under such evidence, and that hence the tone of uncertainty which the Apostle adopts when speaking of Simon's forgiveness,—“Pray God, *if perhaps* the “thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”

However this may be, certainly the contrasts of character in the Church of Christ are in this passage of Scripture most forcibly drawn out. Here is Simon the Apostle, a man of the most

intense disinterestedness, who had forsaken all to follow his Master, confronted with Simon the Sorcerer, who had nominally embraced Christianity, as discerning in it a secret which may throw power and wealth into his hands. What a natural repulsion must there be between the minds of these men, when one gets an inkling for the moment of the character of the other ! How do they illustrate the inspired similitudes of the wheat and the tares in the same field, the chaff and the grain on the same floor, the good fish and the bad in the same net, the sheep and the goats in the same fold !

The rejoinder made by Simon to the Apostle's censure consists only of fourteen words. But these fourteen words are quite enough to reveal to us the hollowness of the penitence which is professed in them. The Apostle had exhorted Simon to fall on his knees, and beg mercy for himself. Simon, instead of at once complying, intimates that he prefers praying by deputy ; "Pray *ye* to the Lord for me," an emphasis (which is clearly marked in the original) being placed on the "*ye*." How fair-seeming, and yet how false at bottom ! What a show of humility, and yet what an evident hypocrisy ! Prayer for oneself implies some reality of spi-

ritual desire. Where no such desire exists, the soul repudiates prayer as that which would bring it into an uncomfortably close neighbourhood to God. Yet it would have those evils averted, which prayer may avert. So it gladly shifts the burden of prayer to a go-between, to any one whose virtues, or whose official position, seem to place him in immediate communication with Heaven. But there is no grace, where the heart is not prompted to pray for itself.—Again, observe the point to which he wishes the Apostle's prayer to be directed. It is not, "Pray for me, that I may be converted; that true repentance may be given me; that I may receive the influences of God's Spirit; that I may no longer deceive myself;" but, "Pray for me, that your threats may never be realized, that *none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.*" Where the mind of a sinner is solicitous for nothing more than deliverance from the consequences of sin, there is no trace of genuine repentance. The devils, we are told, tremble; there is in their minds (as appears from some of the petitions which they addressed to Our Blessed Lord) a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall

devour God's adversaries. But there is no loathing of sin, as abominable in its own nature; no perception of its intrinsic grievousness; no longing to lay down the burden of corrupt desires. These things come only of Grace.

We must not part from Simon Magus without inquiring, for our own warning, what shape his sin may take in modern times. The original shape passed away for ever with those miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit which gave rise to it, but the animating spirit and principle of the sin may be seen in many forms among ourselves.

1. The bringing secular motives into sacred functions, or into the administration of sacred things, is a sin of similar complexion with Simon's, and may be committed several ways. The minister of God's Word, when he seeks popularity and applause rather than the edification of souls in his ministration; when the motive for his diligence is place and preferment, rather than a simple desire to acquit himself of the great responsibilities undertaken at Ordination; the candidate for the sacred ministry, who seeks Holy Orders as a means of comfortable subsistence, and prays to be put in one of the priest's offices, that he may eat a piece of

bread; the layman who, having the disposal of ecclesiastical benefices and cures of souls, bestows them in any shape for his own advantage, rather than as he conceives to be best for the spiritual interests of the flock of Christ; and, in a lower degree, all who without a spark of earnestness take part in God's Worship, with the view rather of maintaining a character than of seeking a blessing—all these manifest in different shapes and lower grades something of the spirit of him, who made the first great proposal in the history of the Church to procure for money, and to exercise for popularity and gain, the powers of an Apostle.

2. But if we view this sin of Simon's in its root and principle, we shall find it to reach to many other cases besides those referred to. St. Peter places his finger upon the black spot in Simon's heart,—he detects the radical fault when he says, "Because thou thoughtest" (for so it ought to be rendered) "to purchase the free *gift of God with money.*" There is a hard and coarse worldliness, common at all times, but more especially common when civilization is much advanced, and material resources much developed, whose characteristic sentiment is that any thing and every thing is to be had for

money. The falseness of such a sentiment is of course transparent. Money obviously cannot purchase any thing which enters even into the lower life of man. It cannot purchase beauty, it cannot purchase talent for its possessor, though it may put these things at his command. It cannot purchase health; it cannot procure an hour's extension of our span of life. Comeliness, talent, health, life, are God's free gifts, and He distributes them as He listeth, without money and without price. Of course it is not *theoretically maintained*, even by the veriest worldling, that these things are procurable for money, much less that higher blessings are so procurable. But what is not theoretically maintained, is often practically and virtually asserted. Men do not dispute for it as a controversial thesis; but they live, they act, they conduct themselves as if it were true. And how many thousands are there who live and act as if it were true that money could procure happiness, peace of mind, contentment, and satisfaction of the heart! How many thousands are there who place their happiness in external circumstances, and, because money can unquestionably command advantageous circumstances, feel therefore that it is the one great

secret of happiness ! But that love to God and man, which is the true contentment of the soul, that joy in the hope of glory which follows upon faith in Christ, that peace of conscience which flows to us through His atoning Wounds, can no more be purchased by thousands of gold and silver, than the first burst of the morning, with its fresh rustling breeze and its twitter of birds, can be so purchased. The spring of true joy in the heart is God's gift ; it is in the character, not in the circumstances, of man ; and he whose circumstances are the most prosperous, may know the least of it, may have, in the midst of affluence and luxury, a heart corroded with care and disquieted with apprehensions. Wherefore, "take heed and beware of covetousness,"—of that subtle trust in the power of the good things of this world to communicate happiness, which, in an age when civilization makes life easy and multiplies its conveniences, is ever so ready to insinuate itself into the heart.

3. One thought more our passage suggests, even if to apply it so be rather to accommodate it than to draw out its obvious lessons. "Thou thoughtest that *the free gift of God* may be "purchased with money."

The highest of all God's free gifts is acquittal,

justification, or, in other words, righteousness. It is offered to us in the Gospel as the result, not of human endeavour or human merit, but of Christ's finished, perfect, and glorious work. But how many are there who vainly think that it may be purchased with money, not indeed with the gold that perisheth, but with the spiritual currency of prayers, fastings, alms-deeds, good works—how many who cling pertinaciously to the idea that they must pay down something to God in the shape of effort, before they can hope to win acceptance with Him, not perceiving that acceptance has already been won for us by the Blood and Righteousness of Christ, and not weighing that grave query of St. Paul, "Who hath first given to the Lord, "and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" No! God gives us freely His Son, and in Him acceptance, pardon, righteousness, and strength, before He condescends to accept any thing from us. He will be known by us as Sovereign Donor, not as any man's debtor. True it is that there is a recompense of Grace, but it comes after, and as the result of, acceptance. It is not the procuring cause, it is but the effect of mercy—mercy shown in the first instance without a single merit, except Christ's Merit, and without

a single plea except His Blood. Is it not written of the blessings of the Gospel, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price?" Think not then that the free gift of God may be purchased with money. Do but open thy heart to it, and it is thine.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ST. PHILIP'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE ETHIOPIAN.

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him."—ACTS viii. 26—30.

THE exposure of Simon Magus's wickedness, and its censure by the Apostle, must, one would think, have acted as a sort of check to St. Philip the Evangelist, and have occasioned him some annoyance. It was he who, in the simplicity and unsuspectingness of his heart, had admitted this bad and worldly-minded man into the fold of Christ; and it might easily have occurred to him that it would be well to be more cautious for the future, and not to administer Baptism without some test of sin-

cerity in the applicants for it. And the explicitness of the directions which led him into the desert, and threw him across the Ethiopian, may have been God's answer to his thoughts. When the Ethiopian asked for Baptism, Philip might have demurred about conferring it, had not the guidance of God's Hand in the matter been so very plain that it could not be mistaken. First, a supernatural guidance *from without* had been vouchsafed to him. An angel of the Lord had directed him with great explicitness to take the journey, on which he fell in with the eunuch. There were two roads leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, the northern one by Ramleh, which was more populous, the other through Hebron, better adapted for carriages, but wild and unfrequented<sup>1</sup>, infested by maraud-

<sup>1</sup> Some good commentators (Mr. Humphry among them) suppose that the words "which is desert" (*αὐτὴ ἐστὶν ἔρημος*) refer, not to the road, but to the city of Gaza; in which case they must be regarded as a parenthesis inserted by the historian, warning the reader that the Gaza alluded to was old Gaza, then in ruins, and not the new town of that name, built by Gabinus on an adjoining site. But Dean Alford well replies, that *not Gaza itself, but the road leading to Gaza, was Philip's destination*, and that therefore the warning that old, not new, Gaza was meant, would be pointless, *unless it could be made out that there were two roads, leading respectively to the two Gazas*. It is better, therefore, to

ing tribes and wild beasts. Strange as it might seem, Philip, a lone man, obliged to go on his feet, is directed to take this latter and more southern route. When he arrived at the point

take the words "which is desert," as referring *to the road*, and to understand them as part of the angel's address to Philip,—as if he had said, "It may seem strange to you; but you are to go by the unfrequented road." So Archdeacon Wordsworth. Dr. Robinson says :—"Anciently there appear to have been two direct roads (from Jerusalem to Gaza); one down the great Wady es-Sūrār by Beth-shemesh . . . the other, through Wady el Musūrr to Eleutheropolis, and thence to Gaza through a more southern tract. Both these roads exist at the present day; and *the latter now actually passes through the desert; that is, through a tract of country without villages, inhabited only by nomadic Arabs.* . . . That this district was" (in the time of St. Philip) "in like manner deserted, is not improbable. In the days of the Maccabees, the Idumeans had taken possession of Judæa as far north as to Hebron, Adora, and Marissa, cities lying on or near the mountains, where they were subdued, and compelled to embrace Judaism. 1 *Macc.* v. 65. *Joseph. Antiq.*, xiii. 9, 1; xv. 7, 9. This serves to show that *the southern part of Judæa was no longer occupied by the Jews themselves; nor is there any mention of cities or villages in the plain between Gaza and the mountains, later than the time of Nehemiah.* It seems therefore probable, that even then the migratory hordes of the southern desert had spread themselves further to the north, and thus connected this tract, as at the present day, with their own desert."

The district in question, though desert (as regards the lack of habitations), is very fertile, and yields abundant crops of grain. (*Robinson's Biblical Researches*, 1841, vol. ii. p. 640, Note xxx.)

where the road from Jerusalem fell into that by which he had come from Samaria, he saw a chariot, in which was a person of some consequence, who, to beguile the tediousness of the route, was reading the Scriptures of the Old Testament aloud. Then a second intimation was made to Philip, which must have banished all doubt from his mind as to God's design of Grace towards the Ethiopian. This time the intimation was from within. "*The Spirit* said "unto Philip" (by an inward prompting which could not be mistaken), "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."

It is observable that when, later in the history of the Acts, St. Peter is to be sent to the Gentile proselyte, Cornelius, with the view of admitting him formally to the fold of Christ, his Jewish scruples as to the propriety of such a step are overruled by a similar twofold intimation. He sees a vision, and hears a voice from heaven, which explained the lesson to be drawn from it. And "while Peter thought on the "vision, *the Spirit* said unto him, Behold, three "men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee "down, and go with them, doubting nothing, "for I have sent them."

St. Philip's mission to the Ethiopian was a

prelude of St. Peter's apostolic mission to Cornelius. Both the eunuch and Cornelius appear to have belonged to that class of men, which the Providence of God had prepared as a sort of bridge, whereby the Gospel might pass over from the Jewish to the Gentile mind. Both were proselytes, that is to say heathens by extraction, who had been converted to Judaism by the manifest traces of divinity which distinguished the religion of Moses, and by the correspondence of the law of Sinai with the law written upon the human heart. These proselytes adhered to Judaism, according to their convictions, with more or less strictness. Some appropriated only the monotheism of the Jews, their doctrine of the Divine government of the world, their hope of Messiah, and the chief points of their morality; others went so far as to receive circumcision, and submit themselves to the ceremonial law. Of Cornelius it is strongly implied, if not actually asserted, that he was a proselyte of the less strict kind, one who did not belong sacramentally to the Jewish Communion. For when the Jewish party at Jerusalem allege against St. Peter his intercourse with Cornelius, they do it in these terms: "Thou wentest in to men

“*uncircumcised*, and didst eat with them.”

The Ethiopian may have been a proselyte of the stricter class, in which case there would be a method observable in the admission of Gentiles to the Christian covenant ; first, *circumcised* heathen, of which the Ethiopian would be the first recorded instance ; secondly, *uncircumcised* heathen, of which Cornelius would be the first specimen.

Some commentators have supposed indeed (improbably, it appears to me) that this Ethiopian was a Jew by birth, who, like Daniel, had risen to eminence at a foreign court, and that the term “Ethiopian” denotes only his residence, and not his extraction. This view is adopted for the purpose of making out that St. Peter was the first who ever admitted a heathen born to the privileges of Christianity. And St. Peter no doubt *was* the first who did this formally and officially, and under the sanction of the Apostolic commission. There seems, however, every reason to suppose that Gentiles had been admitted to the Church before Cornelius, though this step had never had the seal of the Apostles impressed upon it, until St. Peter commanded Cornelius to be baptized in the Name of the Lord. A truth may be recognized

some time before it is formally recognized. A king succeeds to the throne of his ancestor, and is saluted as king, the moment his ancestor expires; but he is not formally recognized as king until the day of his coronation.

What more remains to be said about the antecedents of the Ethiopian, may be briefly despatched. Judging from the name of his queen (which, like Pharaoh, was a dynastic name, inherited by all the rulers of the country, and not the designation of an individual), he belonged to the kingdom of Meroe, an irregular territory on the south of Egypt, included between two or more rivers, and nearly corresponding to the modern Sennaar. This kingdom was apparently founded by Egyptian colonists, and inherited from Egypt its civilization and its arts. But whatever might have been its origin, it rose to wealth and power. Its natural productiveness—its gold, copper, salt, timber, millet, and game—combined with its situation, by which it commanded the trade of the Red Sea, of Egypt, Ethiopia, and the interior of Africa, was the secret of its wealth. Its power was shown by the stand which a former Queen Candace had made against the Roman arms in Egypt, about a quarter of a century

before the Christian era. She was ultimately defeated, but showed such spirit as to win very fair terms from Augustus Cæsar, and to procure a remission of the tribute usually imposed in such cases. The incident which we are considering occurred about fifty-six years after that defeat, and doubtless under another queen. The Jews, we know, had spread very widely in Africa. In the earlier half of the third century before Christ, their Scriptures had been translated into Greek at Alexandria, and disseminated, no doubt, through the adjacent regions. This chamberlain of the queen, who held the post of first lord of her treasury, had come across them and their Scriptures. What passed between him and St. Philip shows conclusively that, though high in station, he had a docile, simple spirit, eager for instruction, and willing to follow what approved itself as right to his conscience. He had been struck by the Jews' religion, and believed it to be from God. His belief involved a periodical pilgrimage to Jerusalem, at the time of the great festivals. These journeys must have been inconvenient to one in his position; and, at a heathen court, where the ram-headed Ammon was the great object of worship, may have entailed some risk

of obloquy and suspicion; but he did not on this account decline them. He was returning, when Philip met him, from the devotions which he had been paying in the Temple. And he was careful (as too many who profess and call themselves Christians are not) to nourish those sentiments which he had received in public worship, and not to let them evaporate too speedily in the atmosphere of the world. It was a Rabbinical maxim, that "one who is on a journey, and without a companion, should employ his thoughts in the study of the law." Upon the principle of this maxim he was acting. He was reading aloud (as is the custom of Orientals, even when by themselves) the book of the Prophet Isaiah. It was by no means the plainest part of the Old Testament, for it was not narrative, but prophecy; and we are expressly told that he found obscurities in it, and required explanations. Yet it opened ever and anon glorious prospects for the future; and there was a pathos and a majesty in the Prophet's style which had a strange power to attract and rivet him, even as "spices" (to use Bengel's exquisite simile) "transmit their fragrance through the wrapper which enfolds and conceals them." The missionary whom

he encountered in the desert unfolded for him the wrapper, explained the mystery which had baffled him, and, in doing so, led him on to a higher faith in God than he had hitherto known. And thus was fulfilled in his case the promise, "To him that hath shall be given." He had been faithful hitherto to the Divine guidance, and now it is vouchsafed to him in larger measure. He had diligently used the lower means of Grace exhibited by the old Covenant; he is now admitted, as his reward, to the first Sacrament of the new.

We shall now pursue some of the interesting and edifying lines of thought along which the narrative, as far as we have yet gone, leads our minds.

1. We have here, then, the first instance on record of a private ministration of the Gospel. The total change in the sphere of St. Philip's labours is very observable, and must have surprised him very much. He had hitherto been labouring in the city of Samaria. And his labours had been successful on a large scale. "The people," it is said in our version (but in the original it is "the multitudes"), "with one accord gave heed unto those things which

“Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles “which he did.” The sensation of joy consequent on the reception of those tidings, passed like an electric shock through the *whole* population ;—“there was great joy in that city.” And now, by the Divine command, he is withdrawn from this large sphere of usefulness, and sent into one of the desolate highways of the country. And when he arrives there, a single man is pointed out to him—attended probably only by two or three retainers—as the new field of operations to which he is called. Now for all those who look down on private ministrations, as compared with those which take place in the theatre of the congregation, and which give more room for the display of gifts, here is a correction of their error. It is true, no doubt, that, by a law of sympathy which is part of the constitution of our nature, gatherings of men are more impressionable than individuals, and the argument which falls cold and dead in private, seems to glow and circulate in a crowd, and to gather a new power of conviction as it passes from mind to mind. Men act by a certain instinct on one another ; and when they are in close neighbourhood, the least impression made is contagious, and multiplies itself with

great speed. And it is also true that in the economy of His Church, God has recognized this law of sympathy, and makes it the basis of His operations, putting honour upon the ordinance of public preaching, and attaching the promise of Our Saviour's Presence to a gathering of Christians, however small, in His name. But be it observed that even Apostles, who had a commission to "go, teach all nations," and, in virtue of that commission, might have challenged the whole universe of immortal souls as their audience, did not think themselves exempt from the labours of private ministration. "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you," says St. Paul to the Ephesian elders, "but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and *from house to house*, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The message of the Gospel announced in public has, when opportunity offers, to be enforced in private, to be applied to the wants, emergencies, trials of a particular soul. For indeed Christ ransomed with His precious blood, not all of us only, but each of us ; and it is on that ground that His Gospel is to be carried not only into the midst of His assembled Church,

but into the recesses of the individual heart and conscience. And an attempt to carry it thither, made judiciously under the guidance of God's Providence and Spirit—an attempt directed, like St. Philip's, to fall in with the current of thought in which the mind of the person addressed is running, and to reach the conscience at a moment when it is impressible—may often be largely blessed, as St. Philip's was,—the more largely, perhaps, because in such an attempt there can be no room for display, and therefore the motive in making it must be single. Nor can there be any doubt that the want of this attempt is the secret of much ministerial failure, and the reason why many modern sermons are so practically inefficient. We Protestants have abandoned that hold upon the individual conscience which was supplied by the confessional; and doubtless the confessional, resorted to as the normal discipline of the spiritual life, rather than as the corrective in its crises, would morally enfeeble the soul. But it is to be feared that the reformed clergy too much neglect that study of their people's characters in private intercourse, which alone can enable them to speak to the consciences of individuals a word in due season. Too often,

from their omitting to put themselves in correspondence with the human heart as it shows itself in real life, do their addresses evince a want of sympathy with the trials and necessities of their flocks. And a want of sympathy with any soul is a want of power over that soul.

2. There is another point in which St. Philip's new sphere of labour is remarkably contrasted with that which he has just left. The Samaritans, among whom he had met with such success, were a simple people; and we may perhaps gather from the impression which magical arts and miracles made upon them, that they were chiefly of the lower class, not persons of station or influence. The eunuch, on the contrary, is a man of large wealth and high position, and (for those times) of some education—the first minister at a queen's court. Philip works no miracle before *him*, to show that the message he brings is from God, but quietly falls in with that process of thought which is going on in his mind, and thus brings him to an acknowledgment of God's truth.

There can be no doubt that wealth offers great obstacles to piety. "How hardly shall they "that have riches," said Our Lord, "enter into "the kingdom of God!"—hardly, because the

possession of riches so insidiously entices the heart to trust in them for a contentment and a satisfaction which they can never bestow. And there can be no doubt, also, that the life of a *court* is unfavourable to the development of piety, unfavourable from its many hollow forms and courtesies, which must tend to kill simple and natural feeling, and in a *despotic* court (such as probably was that of Candace) from the servile adoration of power to which a courtier would be tempted. But in order to show by the most convincing method of proof—example—that “the things which are impossible with men” are possible with God,” and that grace is able to surmount any and every difficulty arising from our circumstances, instances are presented to us in the Old and New Testament of men who have attained eminent sanctity and stood high in God’s favour, while at the same time they have been men of wealth and influence—have stood next to a throne, nay, in some cases, have sat upon it. Among these, Daniel in the Old Testament, and this Ethiopian in the New, shine with peculiar lustre. There is something analogous in their fortunes, which, though the materials in the case of the Ethiopian are so scanty, enable us to draw a parallel between

them. Both rose to wealth and eminence at heathen courts, and held high trusts from heathen sovereigns. Both, though placed in these difficult circumstances, fulfilled their religious duties with a brave and admirable fidelity. Both were students of prophecy, for the eunuch was found reading the prophet Isaiah, and Daniel tells us of himself; "I, Daniel, understood "by books the number of the years whereof the "word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years "in the desolations of Jerusalem." And we may add that to both was sent a messenger of God for the elucidation of prophecy—to Daniel the angel Gabriel, who both gave and interpreted the prophecy of the seventy weeks, to the eunuch St. Philip the Evangelist, an inspired human ambassador. And the lesson is in both cases the same—that, whatever be the circumstances in the midst of which Divine Providence has thrown our lot, however adverse to piety, however apparently blighting to the spiritual life, grace can enable us to walk in the midst of them unharmed, as the three holy children walked in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. How vain usually are our complaints of the position in which Providence has placed us ;

how much our reluctance to serve God lies really in the will, not in extraneous hindrances; and how certainly should we find, if moved to some other station in life, that instead of escaping temptation thereby, we had only exchanged a lower form of it for a higher.

3. Another thought arises from the high station of this Ethiopian, to which a little prominence may fairly be given. His position, and the influence it gave him, made him a peculiarly valuable convert. St. Philip, by his withdrawal from Samaria, had not thrown away his labour even in a numerical point of view. All souls, it is true, are of equal value intrinsically and in God's eyes. For the very humblest and most ignorant, no less than for the loftiest and most refined, was paid down the ransom of the blood of Christ. But of course it cannot be said that each soul has an equal circle of influence, or is equally adapted by its circumstances or its endowments to bias other souls. There are some who live in comparative isolation from society, or who, although they mix freely with their equals, are so low down in the social scale, that their opinions cannot be widely felt. And there are others who, from the possession of commanding abilities or commanding station,

inevitably carry many with them, and multiply their own convictions in the minds of others. One of the former is as dear to Our Blessed Lord as one of the latter; nay, are we not led to believe that the poor, the simple-minded, the unlettered, are among His most favourite disciples? But for the purpose of winning others by his example and influence, a convert of the latter class is the more important. Like a seed, he has the power of self-propagation; in him is the germ of many, and perhaps of many influential, converts. And Philip, probably, when borne away from the eunuch, turned to this thought with satisfaction. Many as had been the souls he had won in Samaria, this man was, in all probability, the pledge and augury of many more. He would carry the Word of God into a new continent (a continent, by the way, which was afterwards to boast many famous Churches and eminent saints), and would plant it there from the vantage-ground of a station all but the highest. Who could set limits to such an influence? This man might be the Apostle of Egypt as well as Ethiopia, might become, in the court of Meroe, the nucleus of a knot of converts who,

“Like circles widening round upon a clear blue river,”

would spread and dilate themselves till all the north of the African continent was Christian, and till, through his instrumentality, that great prophecy had received its completion; "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

4. Finally; learn a lesson from the eunuch's employment when St. Philip met him. He was reading the Scriptures with an inquiring and a candid mind. No opportunity could have been more favourable for the arrival of God's message of mercy and peace through Jesus Christ. "Behold, he readeth the Scriptures," is nearly as hopeful a symptom for the soul as, "Behold, he prayeth." When God sees any one studying the Holy Volume with simplicity and earnestness, He throws Himself across that man's path, whether by a human messenger, or by some dispensation of Providence, or by the inward teaching of His Spirit, until the scales fall from the eyes of the reader, and the study which was begun in darkness and perplexity is concluded in light and joy.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE RELATIONS BETWEEN HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE CHURCH.

“And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.”—Acts viii. 30, 31.

THE chariot of the Ethiopian was passing on, when St. Philip received an inward intimation from the Spirit to join it; and some despatch would be required in order to overtake it. Accordingly, we read that “Philip *ran* thither to “him.” The moment for which he had been sent on this pilgrimage had arrived; he must be alert in arresting it. Great opportunities of good (either of doing or receiving it) sometimes cross our path in life, as the eunuch crossed Philip’s path. They are offered to us once, and then fly off at a tangent, never to recur. As soon as we become sensible that such an opportunity is at hand, we should run up with eagerness to arrest and improve it.

It was remarked in our previous Lecture, that St. Philip's interview with the Ethiopian is the first recorded specimen of a private ministration of the Gospel. In this view of it, it teaches how such ministrations should be conducted, and makes a suggestion respecting that difficult point, the method of opening them. The Evangelist took occasion from the Ethiopian's occupation to put a question to him. And this question led on to a conversation in which the minister of God had the opportunity of placing before this foreigner all the leading points of the Christian Faith. St. Philip fell in, not only with the eunuch, but with the train of thought which the eunuch's mind was pursuing; and thus succeeded in entangling this great fish in the meshes of the Gospel net.

It is surprising (as those well know who are in the habit of private religious intercourse with others) how many good words, how many true and Scriptural words, utterly fail to take hold of the mind of particular persons—fall altogether dead upon their mental ear, because they are not in the state which requires that particular counsel. One soul requires to be convinced of sin, and to be shown the danger of its own insensibility; another has got far beyond this,

has long begun the spiritual life, and is striving after a high measure of sanctity; a third is involved in some semi-intellectual difficulty; another, under a high religious profession, which deceives himself even more than it imposes on his neighbours, is hugging some sin to his heart; another is harassed with scruples of conscience, and fast becoming morbid; another, of unimpeachable outward conduct, is approaching religion with his thoughts rather than his conscience, and beginning to find in it very serious speculative difficulties. Now, as physicians tell us that there is for every form of disorder some one specific in the natural world, so somewhere in the field of God's Word there is a specific for every spiritual malady. If the right specific is offered to an individual, he appropriates it; it is what his conscience requires. But if a specific be offered him for a complaint not at that moment his, no effect is produced, not because the specific has lost its virtue, but because there is no correspondence between it and the state of the patient. Now, in order to offer to men such spiritual remedies as shall meet their case, we must study the direction which their thoughts are taking. And when we come upon them off their guard, and ob-

serve how they are occupied, their occupation will often be a clue to their thoughts. The Ethiopian, when Philip accosted him, was reading the Scriptures with earnestness, doubtless as if he took a pleasure in reading them. This showed the person with whom the Evangelist was so called to deal, to be a religiously-minded and good man. What followed brought out two other points—his docility and willingness to be enlightened by any one who seemed superior to himself in religious attainment, and his ignorance of many vital points. The Ethiopian was a type of that large class of souls, in whom there is some unction and fervour of spirit, without much intelligence. They are simple souls, and take delight in what is good, and are never wearied by religious ordinance, nor ever think they can have too much of it; but the heart has outrun the mind in their religion (infinitely better extreme than that the mind should outrun the heart); they need light, and are honestly willing to receive it from whatever quarter it shines upon them. Such was the Ethiopian; and his character unfolded itself as such to Philip, from his occupations and his observations. Philip was guided by Divine Providence and by the turn of his hearer's

mind (which turn had been given to it by the Divine Spirit) to speak as he did. Under such guidance, he could not fail to speak a word in due season.

Our Lord, in sending forth His seventy disciples to preach the Kingdom of God, had given them this pregnant direction; "Salute no man by the way." He had charged them with a most grave and serious mission; and they were not to allow even the ordinary courtesies of life to distract them from the execution of it. In the common intercourse of society, men begin with trifles and common-place greetings, before they pass to topics of importance. But trifles do not befit the character of those who go straight from the face of God to convey His messages to man. We find Philip here acting on the very letter of Our Lord's precept. God's angel had expressly directed him to take the journey on which he met the eunuch. And when the eunuch appeared, he had received an intimation from God's Spirit to join him. He does not, therefore, open the conversation by saluting the man to whom he was sent. He does not make a remark to him on the state of the weather or of the crops; but begins at once with the business of his mission; "Under-

“standest thou what thou readest?” There must have been something striking to the Ethiopian in this first question of St. Philip. Abrupt it was, when judged by the standard of the world’s manners; but the very reverse of abrupt, it was continuous and pertinent, as addressed to his state of mind. It exactly chimed in with the course his thoughts were taking, and thus did not seem strange to him or out of place. His mind was exercised deeply upon the Scripture he was reading, and this man seemed (as indeed he was) the messenger of God come to resolve his difficulties. He has no hesitation, therefore, in inviting him to come up into the chariot. Alas! that our thoughts, unlike those of this simple African, should be exercised so much upon the world and secular things, that spiritual remarks seem to us an inconvenience and intrusion. We live (except just when we pray) in a world of thought from which God and Christ are banished; and thus the sudden intrusion into conversation of the subject of religion strikes us as a want of tact on the part of the person making it. It pieces ill with the state of mind habitual to us, and into which we relapse as soon as we quit our devotions.

And now our narrative opens up a most curi-

ous and interesting question, which has divided opinion in all ages of the Church, and into the bearings of which we must strive to get some clear insight. The Ethiopian had the Scriptures in his hand. But he modestly professes an inability to understand them without some expositor. St. Philip appears as such an expositor, and opens his mind to the true significance of what had perplexed him. Here then for the first time, in this challenge of St. Philip, and this artless reply of the eunuch, is brought before us the great subject of the relations subsisting between the Church and Holy Scripture.

“How can I understand what I read, except “some man should guide me?” Intending to express nothing more than the sentiment of the moment, the Ethiopian here gives utterance to a great principle. The Holy Scriptures are the Church’s Law, both as to precept and doctrine. They contain, without the slightest admixture of error, all articles of Faith, and all principles of Christian Duty. They are given by Inspiration of God, a phrase which means (at all events) thus much,—that, however much the human mind may have been used as an instrument in giving them, they were not suggested or origi-

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nated by the human mind, which is the case with uninspired books. Moreover, in a very important sense (which should always be borne in mind in forming views of this subject), the Church stands upon Holy Scripture. To Scripture the Church must point for her charter; if the Church is to explain what she is, how she originated, on what grounds she claims our deference, she must evidently go to the Bible for it. Suppose, for instance, that this Book of the Acts of the Apostles did not exist, and that Our Lord's commission and instructions to His Apostles were not found in the Gospels, the Church would in that case have her ground cut away from under her. What the Church is, what are her functions, and what her constitution, can only be known from these parts of Scripture; the Church has no pretensions, no vouchers for her authority, but what is contained in the Bible. In this point of view, then, Scripture is altogether paramount to the Church, and *prior in order of thought*. I am not cognizant of the existence of such a body as the Church, but from the Acts and parts of the Gospels. I must think, therefore, first of these portions of Scripture, before I can arrive at any ideas about the Church.

Yet, although the Scriptures are prior to the Church *in order of thought*, it is equally evident that the Church is prior to the Scriptures *in order of time*. The Church existed before there were any Scriptures; and, moreover, each individual soul among us must, by the necessity of the case, be addressed by the Church, before he can be addressed by the Scriptures. First, the Church existed before there were any Scriptures. No Book of the Old Testament was written before Moses, and yet from the time of Abel onward, there were believers in the world, who supported upon the promise of the Seed of the woman a spiritual hope, and who made a protest by their conduct against idolatry and unrighteousness. No Book of the New Testament had been composed at the time of the Ethiopian's conversion, yet there was a most flourishing Church at Jerusalem, dowered with the gifts, as well as the graces, of the Spirit, officered by Apostles and Deacons, and reprov- ing the miserable divisions of modern Churches, by exhibiting a multitude of believers "of one heart and of one mind."—And each one of us, as we come into the world, is approached by the Church with the offer of grace and mercy, before he can be approached by the Scriptures.

It is the Church of our day which takes us in her arms, in the dawn of life, and offers us to Christ in Baptism. That is the theory and principle (though very little understood) on which godparents, and not parents, act for the child in Baptism; the godparents represent the Christian Society, whereas the parents only represent natural interest in the child; the godparents are to the child the Church of the day, which takes him up and solemnly dedicates him to God. Again; the religious teacher (be it mother or guardian, or tutor) acts as a representative of the Church. And observe how this teacher necessarily goes to work. The child is taught its religion by Catechisms,—short summaries, that is, of faith and practice, compiled by the Christian Society to which he belongs, but gathered out of Holy Scripture, and proved by it. To suppose that a child, even when bordering on the age of an adult, could gather for itself the main points of the Faith (the doctrine, for instance, of the Trinity, of the Atonement, or the Sacraments) out of the Holy Scriptures, would be so wild an hypothesis, that no one in his sound senses ever made it. Nay, why do I speak of a child? Suppose a fully grown man, competently educated on secular

subjects,—does any one really believe that, if his mind had been left a blank on religious subjects till the age, say, of twenty-five, and if then he had been set down with a Bible, to make out the articles of the Faith for himself, he could have made them out? Would not such a mind flounder about hopelessly in the absence of all first principles, not knowing to what quarter of the field of Scripture first to address itself? The materials, out of which the Creeds are constructed, are doubtless within that man's reach; but how many years would he take (supposing him to be absolutely devoid of the rudiments of religious knowledge) in constructing the Creed out of the materials! No! to attain knowledge on any subject in this manner, is chimerical. No man ever did, or ever will, attain knowledge so. The mind must proceed in the first instance upon human authority; it can understand nothing, except some man take it by the hand and guide it. But in after days, having been imbued with the Faith in childhood—having had its memory charged with sound formularies, and its sympathies enlisted on the side of Christian Doctrine, it can doubtless recognize the Faith in Holy Scripture, and see how it may be conclusively proved thereby.

This comparison of the Creeds, and of the Articles of our own Church, with the Holy Scripture (the alone source of true doctrine and right principles of conduct) should no doubt be made, after prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, by every individual who is competent to make it. It is not only his privilege and his right to conduct such an inquiry, it is his solemn responsibility to do so, and to do it with all candour and seriousness. The Bible can be to none of us the *original teacher* of Truth. Nor can any of us understand the Bible, without a previous education in Divine Truth. But it is to all of us the great *criterion* of Truth. And we must not shrink from the duty of testing by this infallible criterion what we receive at first upon human authority.

We have no fear whatever that the views of the Church of England, as expressed in her Articles, much less that the Catholic Faith, as expressed in the Nicene Creed, will be shaken by this appeal, wherever it is made modestly and in the spirit of earnest prayer. Yet, as regards lesser points of religious belief, and those upon which two opinions may be formed by persons substantially agreed as to the main

points, a word of caution needs to be added. Correct conclusions upon these are scarcely likely to be arrived at, if we discard the illustrative commentary drawn from the usages and known sentiments of the primitive Church. This commentary often developes what is found in Scripture in the shape of an obscure hint. Take the case of Infant Baptism. There are passages from which it may be inferred that it is conformable to the mind of Christ to baptize infants; but any one who should say that from the Bible alone the question of Infant Baptism can be entirely set at rest, would surely place a greater strain upon the passages in question than in fairness they can be made to bear. But if you will allow the usages and sentiments of the primitive Church, as attested by the earliest Fathers, to be any evidence of what the Apostolic practice was—if you will read the Scriptural passages bearing upon the subject in the light thrown upon them by the writings of those Christians who lived nearest to Apostolic days—if you believe that certain practices which are found universally prevalent in the second and third centuries, must have had some sanction in the teaching or example of the Apostles, then the evidence in favour of

Infant Baptism becomes so strong that it is impossible for any reasonable man to resist it. And in this manner the Church, represented by her earliest doctors, may often bring out the significance of what in Scripture is merely a pregnant hint, and enable us fully to understand what we read there.

The relations which the Church bears to Holy Scripture, have been well illustrated by those which exist between the judicial and the legislative power in the State. A judge in this country has no authority whatever to make the law. The law is made by the three estates of the realm assembled in Parliament, and the judge's part is simply the subordinate one of interpreting and administering it, of expounding what it is, and applying it to the particular cases which fall under his jurisdiction. I may add, on the one hand, that the judge himself is as much under the law, as entirely obliged to observe it in his own person, as those who are tried before him; that the law is supreme over all, over those who administer it as much as over any other subjects,—nay, even over the Sovereign herself, who is bound to govern according to the Constitution; and, on the other, that juries, whose part it is to give the

critical verdict on which the course of law depends, would more often than not go wrong in their decisions, unless the judge, who is the law's authorized expositor, directed them as to the principles which must rule their verdict. Well: the Holy Scriptures are the Law; the Church is the Judge; and the individual soul, who must, in the exercise of his own conscience and reason, form for himself his religious opinions, is the Jury. The Holy Scriptures are the Church's Law; they emanate from God Himself, than whom no authority can be higher; they are above all, and they have a right to control all; they are perfect; no human authority, not even an assembly of all the wisest and best prelates in the world, could venture, without blasphemy, to add any thing to them, or subtract any thing from them. And thus it is an awful, and even impious arrogance in the Bishop of Rome, to make it obligatory, in the nineteenth century, upon members of his Communion, to believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary was an exception to that common law of fallen humanity; "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me."

But in interpreting these Holy Scriptures, in

seeking to understand them aright, the individual soul needs help, needs the guidance of the Church, who is the witness, keeper, and expositor of Holy Writ. If he rejects this guidance, he rejects one great aid which God has given him for arriving at a right conclusion. Nay, more; he kicks down, as many do, the ladder by which he himself has risen to that knowledge of Divine Truth, which he at present possesses. Whence did he derive those rudiments of religion upon which every higher stage of religious knowledge must be built? Where did he obtain his Creeds, which contain an outline of all essential truth? He obtained them from the Church, or Christian society, which has drawn them up, handed them down, and at length has lodged them in his hands. Whence his intimate conviction that these Creeds are substantially true, and the horror he would feel if his faith were shaken in any article of them? This arises from his having been submitted to a Christian education, which has fostered the grace imparted to him in his Baptism. And his Baptism was given him by the Church of his day. Surely this is enough to establish the Church's claim upon his veneration and respect. And yet, should the Church,

as any particular local branch of it might do, impose new Articles of Faith, and new terms of Communion, he must, at the risk of all that he holds most dear, break with such a Society. Whenever the judge imposes new laws, it is high time to side with the law against the judge.

I cannot but remark, in conclusion, that we are favoured indeed who have such a commentary upon the Holy Scriptures as the Book of Common Prayer. We may not have learning or leisure to study Church history ; it may not be possible for us to make ourselves acquainted with the writings of Fathers, or the Decrees of Councils. But here, in the Book of Common Prayer, we have a plain and compendious guide to the understanding of Holy Scripture, which will very often (if we consult it) resolve a difficult question, and put some point of religious opinion, if not in a new, yet in a true light. Do we ever use the Prayer Book thus ? If we did so habitually, we should find many moot points, raised in these days of controversy, settled for us, and settled, I do not hesitate to say, with so much candour and so much guardedness from dangers on opposite sides, as would at once approve itself to our minds as the *true*

settlement of the question. Remember that substantially the Prayer Book is a treasure which has descended to us from the purest and most primitive ages of the Church. Remember that it received its present shape from men, on whose minds Gospel light had dawned after a long period of darkness and superstition, yet from men of ripe theological learning, who were profoundly versed in the history and writings of the early Church, and still more in the study of Holy Scripture. And then judge of the immense aid which such a book is likely to afford towards the understanding of the Scriptures, and let it serve to you, wherever God's Word is obscure or doubtful, to explain and illustrate it.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PRAYER BOOK AN INTERPRETER OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

“And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.”—Acts viii. 30, 31.

THE interpretation of Holy Scripture is one of the functions which the Church has to discharge. This is recognized in our Twentieth Article, where it is said that although “the Church has “authority in controversies of faith,” yet it may not “so expound one place of Scripture that it “be repugnant to another.” It may *not* expound in a certain manner; which implies that its business is to expound; but that in doing so, it must not give a one-sided representation of Truth, but keep in view all the testimonies of Holy Scripture on the point at issue.

It was remarked at the end of the last Chapter, that our Church fulfils this office by means of her Prayer Book. But this point is quite im-

portant enough to delay us a little in our course, and to claim a Lecture for itself. We shall consider, therefore, on the present occasion, the Prayer Book as furnishing a guide for the understanding of Holy Scripture, specifying the first instance of its doing so which comes to hand, and leaving you to follow out the subject (which indeed is a very fruitful one) for yourselves.

Let us suppose, then, a person docile, like the Ethiopian, and seeking light upon some of the religious questions which divide opinion at the present day. Let us suppose him distressed by the differences which prevail even among members of the same Communion, and not a little perplexed by the fact that each school of divines appeals to Holy Scripture with equal confidence, and quotes texts with equal glibness. Let us suppose him under these circumstances desiring that some authority to which he can defer would lay these questions at rest in such a way as to satisfy the reason and conscience of fair and candid people. I say, to satisfy reason and conscience; for, as was observed in our last Lecture, it is as much a man's duty as his right to exercise his reason and conscience on questions of religion, and all that the Church (or Chris-

tian Society) can do, is to guide his decisions, and to say; "Search, now, and see whether this "or that view of the subject does not illustrate "Holy Scripture, and bring out the force of its "several notices, better than another."

Now I say that a man in this state of mind will find no fairer or safer guide to the meaning of the Bible than the Book of Common Prayer. Let him take this Book in hand, and ask what its testimony is in moot points of controversy, and then, having obtained this testimony by an impartial review of all the passages bearing on the question, let him ask, "Saith not the Law" (i. e., the Scripture, which is the Church's Law) "the same also?"

The first subject of controversy which will meet him on the threshold of the Morning and Evening Prayer, is the subject of Ministerial Absolution. It is a subject very much agitated in the present day, and very differently settled, some believing the power of Absolution, as claimed by any modern ministers, to be a mere fiction, others attaching to it, it may be, an undue preponderance. Let us see what is the view of the Book of Common Prayer, as gathered from the various parts of the Offices where the subject is touched upon.

The foundation of the Prayer Book doctrine must be sought in the Service for the Ordering of Priests, where the Bishop, in the administration of Holy Orders, is directed to say to each recipient separately; "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." Now there is no need for us to run away with crude impressions of what these words import; we will patiently make out, by a comparison of other passages, what the Prayer Book means us to understand by them. After the Confession in the Daily Morning and Evening Prayer, there follows a form called "the Absolution or Remission of Sins, to be pronounced by the priest alone, standing; the people still kneeling." Now it is quite clear that here we shall obtain a clue to the meaning of the words of Ordination, and that the power which is given to the priest in these solemn words he is now about to exercise. What, then, is this Absolution? It is a declaration on the part of the minister that "God pardons and absolves all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel," accompanied by a recognition of the truth that this repentance and this faith are in God's hands, and to be

sought of Him in earnest prayer. But it is an authoritative declaration, made by the minister in the execution of his office as an ambassador of Christ; for it is prefaced by the assurance that "God hath given power" (authority) "and commandment to His Ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." The priest, then, appears here as the ambassador of a Sovereign, whose subjects have rebelled, and who is charged with an official announcement of an amnesty to them, and of the terms on which individuals may have an interest in the amnesty. One meaning, therefore, which the Church attaches to the words, "Whose soever sins ye forgive," &c., is obviously, "Whose soever sins ye declare forgiven on terms sanctioned by Holy Scripture."

In the more solemn Office of Holy Communion we have another form of Absolution, which must evidently enter as an element into the Church doctrine on the subject. It is a simple prayer, grounded on God's promises of pardon to the penitent and believing, that He would grant to the communicants forgiveness, sanctification, and the legitimate issue of forgiveness and sanctification—glory. But

this prayer, like the declaration already considered, is evidently recited officially ; it is not a mere intercession, but an intercession offered by one who has authority to offer it ; in fact it is a most solemn blessing. That this is the view taken of it by our Church is evident from her placing it in the mouth of the Bishop, where the Bishop is present, in preference to that of the priest,—a preference which is not indicated in the less solemn daily form ; “ Then shall the priest” (*or the Bishop, being present,*) “ stand up, and “ turning himself to the people, pronounce this “ Absolution.”

Perhaps some may fail to see how an authoritative prayer for pardon is a higher grade of Absolution than an authoritative declaration of pardon. The distinction, probably, lies in this ; that a declaration is a mere announcement, which effects nothing ; whereas a prayer, if offered in faith, is effective, is an agency in the Kingdom of God, drawing down from Heaven blessings on those who are interceded for. We can see, therefore, a reason why the declaratory form of Absolution should be attached to the more ordinary occasions on which we approach God, whereas the prayer form of it is reserved for times, when we seek Him in His highest

Ordinance, and hold the closest communion with Him which the living can enjoy.

But (and this is the train of thought along which we pass from the two first to the third Absolution) it is possible for us to have but one foot in life, the other being planted in the valley of the shadow of death. We may be awaiting our great change. We may be hastening to that state of existence, where the Presence of God, here apprehended only by faith, will be unveiled. Earthly things may be fast becoming to us like a dream in the night, and heavenly things like waking realities. We can scarcely think that a man placed in those circumstances will be insincere. In health, no doubt, he may act a part. He may delude himself, no less than others, into the belief that he has repentance and faith, when nothing is further from the truth. But if on a death-bed he should confess sins, hitherto hidden from the eyes of men, which have disfigured his life, and express an overwhelming sense of them, and an earnest desire to be forgiven, it is almost impossible to suppose him otherwise than in earnest, and quite impossible, let me add, not to feel compassion for him. Our Prayer Book (if I may be allowed to speak of it as of a living person)

seems to sympathize with such distress. It holds that strong consolation is the right specific for the mind in such a case. And this strong consolation it seeks to supply by its strongest form of Absolution, a form in which the authoritative prayer for pardon is combined with the authoritative declaration of pardon, and both are made in the singular with reference to the individual case. The form runs thus; "Our  
" Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to  
" His Church to absolve all sinners who truly  
" repent and believe in Him, of His great  
" mercy forgive thee thine offences: and by  
" His authority committed to me, I absolve  
" thee from all thy sins, in the name of the  
" Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy  
" Ghost. Amen."

Observe (for in ascertaining the true doctrine of the Prayer Book on this subject, all limitations and restrictions are to be taken into account) that this form is not to be employed except—1. the sick person feel his conscience troubled with some weighty matter; 2. except that weighty matter have been made the subject of special confession; 3. except after such confession the penitent humbly and heartily desire the Absolution. These conditions are ex-

tremely important, because they show our Church's carefulness to ascertain the real penitence of the patient, before she consoles him with this most solemn form. One of her most precious pearls she will not throw before swine. Observe, too, the significant difference of phraseology between the prayer and the declaration. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, of His great mercy, *"forgive thee thine offences."* . . . "By His *"authority, committed to me, I absolve thee* *"from all thy sins."* *To absolve* is not the same thing as *to forgive*. To forgive is the part of God and Christ; the reception of a sinner to God's favour, in virtue of the outflowing of the Divine compassion towards him—this is forgiveness. To absolve, is to declare forgiveness on certain terms, either expressed or implied. Absolution, as distinct from forgiveness, forms part of the Office of the Christian Ministry, and the power of giving it is conferred in those words of the Ordination Service, with which we opened the exposition of the Prayer Book doctrine. It should be observed further that, as our present Prayer Book stands, the Absolution is directed to be given, not necessarily in these words, but *"after this sort."* We know this expression to have been advisedly introduced; for in the first

reformed Prayer Book the words stood thus <sup>1</sup>,  
“after this form.”

The last place of the Prayer Book in which the subject of Absolution is adverted to, is the first exhortation appointed to be given “upon the Sunday or some holy day immediately preceding” the celebration of the Holy Communion. This exhortation recommends a plain and profitable method of preparing for the due reception of the Sacrament. We are to examine ourselves by the rule of God’s commandments; confess ourselves to Him, where we perceive that we have broken them; reconcile ourselves to our neighbours, if we have done wrong to them; and forgive them, if they have done wrong to us. And then follows the paragraph bearing on our present subject; “And because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God’s mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this

<sup>1</sup> “Here shall the sick person make a special confession, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the Priest shall absolve him after this form: and the same form of Absolution shall be used in all private confessions.”—*Rubric in the First Book of Edward VI.*, 1549.

“means cannot quiet his own conscience herein,  
 “but requireth further comfort or counsel, let  
 “him come to me, or to some other discreet and  
 “learned minister of God’s Word, and open his  
 “grief; that by the ministry of God’s holy  
 “Word he may receive *the benefit of Absolu-*  
 “*tion*, together with ghostly counsel and advice,  
 “to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding  
 “of all scruple and doubtfulness.”

The points to be remarked here are ; *first*, that the private Absolution is to be ministered, not in the ordinary course, but in exceptional cases, where people cannot quiet their own consciences by the means previously enjoined ; *secondly*, that it is to be ministered as the correlative of a private confession, or “opening of grief;” *thirdly*, that it is to be imparted by the ministry of God’s holy Word. This last expression seems to indicate a declaratory Absolution, which shall, in God’s Name, announce forgiveness to the penitent. A *prayer* for pardon would hardly be called “an Absolution by the ministry of “God’s Word.”

Let us now give a brief summary of the Prayer Book doctrine of Absolution, as gathered bit by bit from these several passages. 1. The

power of giving Absolution is lodged in the second order of the Ministry at their Ordination.

II. The exercise of the power takes two forms. Sometimes it is an authoritative declaration of God's pardon of sinners, on the terms which He Himself lays down in His holy Word. Sometimes it is an authoritative intercession, calling down forgiveness of sins, and the other blessings which follow in its train, on the persons absolved.

III. In the ordinary course of things, Absolution is to be given in public, in the face of the congregation, and to be appropriated (like every other blessing so offered) by the faith of individuals. But, IV., a particular provision is made for bringing home this consolation to morbid or burdened consciences at critical periods. When such consciences are distressed at the thought of approaching God in the Holy Communion, or of meeting Him in death, let them, after unburdening themselves privately, receive the cordial of a private Absolution. Before death, where there can be little reason to doubt the sincerity of a man's confession, let the form used be as strong and emphatic as possible. But even in this strongest form, let the difference be carefully marked between forgiving and absolving, by recognizing one as the act of God, the other as

the Church's act, and also by following the Absolution with a prayer that "God would not impute unto the penitent his former sins."

The doctrine of the Prayer Book on the subject of Absolution having been thus arrived at, let us now ask the question, "Saith not the "Law" (which is the Scripture) "the same also?" Is there a single passage in Holy Scripture bearing on the subject, the force of which is not brought out in some part or other of the Prayer Book theory?

In the first place, there is the fundamental passage in John xx., where Our Lord, after breathing on His Apostles, gives them the power of remitting and retaining sins in the very terms still employed in the Ordination Service. It is often thought that this was a prerogative peculiar to the Apostles, and not continued to the uninspired men who succeeded them in the Ministry. But what ground is there for such a notion? The miraculous gifts of the Spirit have indeed passed away, there being no further necessity for them, when the Church had gained for itself a firm foothold in the earth. But who will say that the necessity for a power to remit (or absolve from) sins has

passed away? Who will deny that, in the nineteenth century, such a power is as urgently needed for the Church's well-being as it was in the first? And again, when Our Lord gave to His Apostles the Ministerial Commission—the commission to baptize and to teach—did He not expressly look forward to a transmission of this commission to the latest posterity; “Lo, I am with you alway, even “unto the end of the world?” Does any one suppose that the commission to baptize and teach descended no further than the Apostles? Why, then, should the commission to absolve have done so? Is there not in the ministration of Baptism<sup>2</sup> itself an absolution, for do we not

<sup>2</sup> See Barrow *De Potestate Clavium* (Theol. Works, Oxford, 1830, vol. viii., p. 112, &c.). In this masterly treatise it is shown that the power of Ministerial Absolution is exercised in several ways; 1. *Dispositivè*; by way of disposing men to that frame of mind, to which pardon is granted; 2. *Declarativè*; by way of declaring “the word of reconciliation,” and inviting men to be reconciled to God; 3. *Impetrativè*; by way of interceding for the sinner, that pardon may be granted him; and 4. *Dispensativè*; by expressly dispensing remission of sins, and sealing the grant thereof with certain solemn signs.

“This (last) they do, when they confer Baptism, that  
 “‘auspicious Sacrament of the water in use amongst us,  
 “‘washed with which, we are set free from our sins unto  
 “‘eternal life’ (as Tertullian saith); wherein, by dying and  
 “being buried together with Christ, we are justified from sin;

confess "One Baptism for the remission of  
"sins?"

Then, as to the exercise by the Apostles of this power. We find them stating that they were ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech men by them, and that God had given to them the Ministry of Reconciliation. On this ground they besought men to be reconciled to a God, who, by the work of Christ, had been reconciled to them; and they constantly explained that this reconciliation of man to God consisted in repentance and faith, the two main articles, these, of St. Paul's preaching; "I have  
"showed you, and have taught you publicly,  
"and from house to house, testifying both to the  
"Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance  
"toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus  
"Christ." Now what is the Absolution of our Daily Service but a short summary of the Ministry of Reconciliation—an announcement of

"of which St. Peter says, 'Be baptized every one of you, in  
"the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;' and  
"Ananias, addressing St. Paul, 'Arise and be baptized, and  
"wash away thy sins;' and since this is administered at the  
"discretion and by the instrumentality of Priests, they are  
"on that account said to remit sins; and to this St. Cyprian  
"sometimes, and others of the Fathers, refer our Lord's promise ('I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of  
"Heaven')."

pardon to all who repent and believe, and a prayer that the congregation present may come under those terms? As to intercessory prayer in behalf of the flock, there is hardly an epistle of St. Paul's, in which he does not mention such prayer as one great feature of his life, hardly one in which he does not salute the converts to whom he writes, by wishing them grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be urged, no doubt, that neither the Apostolic proclamation of pardon through Christ, nor the Apostolic intercession for primitive converts, was made in a set formulary, or in a stated regular way. That, however, is more than we can safely maintain, unless we had before us ampler details of the proceedings of Christian assemblies than the Scriptures supply us with. It is hard to see how all things can have been done (as St. Paul prescribes) decently and in order, unless there was some method observed in these meetings; and indeed traces of an Apostolic Liturgy have been observed in the Holy Scriptures\* by some who do not content themselves with a cursory view, but seek to glean up the hints, as well as to

\* See Blunt's *History of the Christian Church in the First Three Centuries*, ch. ii.

carry with them the more substantial lessons, of God's Word. But even supposing that the holy fervour of those assemblies did not admit of that precise liturgical method which regulates modern Christian worship, we may say with great assurance that the principles of the Apostolic proclamation of pardon, and of the Apostolic intercession for the flock, are preserved in our forms of Absolution. These forms beautifully enshrine the two great ministerial functions—the delivery of the message of reconciliation, and intercession. And it is these functions that the Apostles claimed as peculiarly their own; “We will give ourselves continually,” said they, in urging the appointment of Deacons, “to Prayer, and to the “Ministry of the Word.”

But is there any instance of an Apostle's having individually applied the benefit of Absolution? And is there any instance of its being according to the mind of the Apostles, that the sick should be pastorally visited, and in the course of such visit consoled with the message of mercy? To begin with the last of these points, the Apostle James's direction as to what should be done in the sickness of a Christian, runs as follows: “Is any sick among you?

“let him call for the elders of the Church; and  
“let them pray over him, anointing him with  
“oil in the name of the Lord. And the  
“prayer of faith shall save the sick, and  
“the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have  
“committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”  
Mark the expression, “if he have committed  
“sins;” the Apostle cannot mean by this, if  
he have at any time committed sins; for that  
would be assumed in all cases, since “there is  
“no man that liveth and sinneth not;” the  
words cannot bear any other meaning than “if  
“his conscience be burdened with any special  
“sins,” “they shall be forgiven him.” Now  
we may put aside all the parts of this direction,  
which have reference only to the age in which  
it was given. Miracles are not wrought now-  
a-days. Gifts of healing have ceased in the  
Church; and therefore we think ourselves war-  
ranted in discarding the oil, which was the  
outward visible symbol (perhaps also the instru-  
ment) of a miraculous cure. But the rest of  
the injunction—all that is spiritual in it, and  
has reference to the sins of patients, and the  
agonizing desire of mercy which sickness some-  
times stirs in their hearts—we will religiously  
observe as coming to us on Apostolic authority.

The elders (or Presbyters) of the Church are, by our Ritual, directed to be summoned in illness. "When any person is sick, notice shall be given thereof to the minister of the parish." He is directed to go to the sick man's house, to give it the salutation of peace, and to pray over the patient for various blessings suitable to his state. And if the patient's conscience is troubled with any weighty matter, which he discloses to the Presbyter of the Church, then the promise of forgiveness in a most emphatic form is to be rehearsed in his ears, for his strong consolation in that solemn hour when flesh and heart are failing.

Once more; an instance is on record in one of St. Paul's congregations, in which a flagrant offender was solemnly put by his directions out of the Church. Whatever else the sentence of Excommunication in those early times may have involved, it must always have involved exclusion from the celebration of the Holy Communion. The censure had its legitimate effect. The offender was overwhelmed with sorrow and confusion; and the Apostle, hearing of this, directs his restoration to Church-fellowship. In doing so, he does not scruple to speak of forgiving the crime of this offender in the person

of Christ. His words are, "To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgive any thing, to whom I forgive it, for your sakes I forgive it in the person of Christ." It is a case of Absolution applied to an individual offender for a particular offence; and it recognizes a right in the Christian minister to employ such language as "I forgive," because he speaks not in his own name, but in the person of his Master.

We have given but a single instance in which the Prayer Book acts as a guide to the understanding of the Bible. But it is an instance strictly in point. I do not hesitate to say that, if the Christian Church recognized no power of Absolution in herself, provided no forms of it, and gave no intimations on the subject, the Scriptural doctrine on the subject would be at best very dark. The bestowal of the power on the Apostles, and the exercise of it by St. Paul, would in that case be dead letters, from which we could learn nothing, records of past time which would not enter at all into our experience. Whereas, when we have applied the practice and the views of our Church as the key to the meaning of Scripture, the

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sacred oracles seem to fly open, and become full of interest and significance. Nothing remains but that I should exhort my readers to apply for themselves the principle of interpretation of which we have furnished a specimen in this chapter. Ascertain, by a patient and candid comparison of all the passages bearing on the subject, what your own Church says on the subject of the Sacraments, of the canon of Holy Scripture, of the Church's own authority, and any other questions on which religious opinion may be divided. Then see whether the Scriptural testimonies on the subject under review do not wonderfully fall in with the Church theory—whether the latter does not constitute a sort of framework, into which the various sacred texts, which before were without method and coherence, easily fall and fit.

. It will doubtless be urged against the course recommended, that the Prayer Book is not the offspring of a single mind, nor the production of a single age; that different parts of it represent different schools of Theology, each of which has left its trace on its own part; and that a compilation drawn from such heterogeneous sources can never furnish a safe or consistent standard of interpretation. Such is the asser-

tion of our enemies; and to it we confidently reply, that we prize our Prayer Book all the more, and consider its guidance all the safer, for precisely this reason, that it is *not* the work of a single class of minds, nor represents the theology of a single school; but that, being substantially primitive in all its great outlines, it has profited by the Church's long experience, and has submitted, after its remodelling at the Reformation, to several revisions made by the most learned and pious divines at considerable intervals of time, and certainly not without a fair hearing of all objections. We do not think it the worse, but, on the contrary, the better, the more comprehensive, and the more Catholic, because it bears the dints of controversy, and because different theological schools have left their impress upon it. While in the circumstance of its having been brought by slow degrees into its present shape, we find rather an evidence of the deep deliberation and study which have been employed in drawing it up, than a liability to inconsistency and uncertainty of sound. In short, we hear in our Prayer Book the voice of the Primitive Church; but of the Primitive Church enriched with many a lesson which it has pleased Divine Pro-

vidence, in the course of an experience of many centuries, to teach her. And we think that we can find no better guide to the understanding of Holy Scripture (itself exhibiting always both sides of the Truth), than a Church so descended as to embrace ancient, and so educated as not to ignore modern, forms of thought.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CONVERSION AND BAPTISM OF THE EUNUCH.

“And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? <sup>1</sup> . . . And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”  
—ACTS viii. 31—36. 83.

BEHOLD, then, the Evangelist seated side by side with the Ethiopian nobleman in his chariot.

<sup>1</sup> I have omitted the thirty-seventh verse, both from the text and from the commentary upon it, for reasons which I cannot state better than in the words of Mr. Humphry (*Commentary on the Acts*, p. 78. Parker, 1854):—

“This verse has been rejected from the text by the best

And the result of this interview is, that the nobleman is instructed in Christian truth, and brought to Christ. But there is one thing in this result which cannot fail to strike us—the circuitousness of the method by which it was brought about. The eunuch had just visited Jerusalem on an errand of devotion. In God's House, which was to be a house of prayer for all nations, he had stood and had offered his worship; and we know that, nothing daunted by the persecution which arose about Stephen, the Apostles remained still in Jerusalem, and that they frequented the Temple. Why was it not arranged in the order of God's Providence, that the eunuch should fall in with one of *them*, and receive the truth in that way? But instead of this, an angel is sent to an Evangelist labouring in a distant province, who bids him travel on

“critics; the preponderance of MSS.” (and, it may be added, the best and oldest MSS.), “of versions, and of patristic authorities being against it (see Scholz). It was perhaps first written in the margin by one who wished to show, what was doubtless the case, though not stated, that a profession of faith preceded the baptism. The interpolation is, however, very ancient; for in the time of Augustine it was quoted by some as an authority for abbreviating the profession of faith made at Baptism. He refutes their argument, without disputing the genuineness of their quotation.”

an unfrequented road in a wild country ; and on this unfrequented road he falls in with the eunuch, and converts him to the faith of Christ.

And certainly this arrangement was much more significant than the other would have been, of the designs for His Church which God was then unfolding. We have already pointed out that the ministry of the Deacons was the dawn of the ministry of St. Paul. It was characterized by freer, wider, less Judaizing views than those of the original Apostles. God's Church, which had been wrapped at her birth in the swaddling-clothes of Judaism, was to have those swaddling-clothes gradually unwound, and eventually to go free. St. Stephen and St. Philip performed the first part of the unwinding, and this was the stage at which the history of the Church had now arrived. It would therefore have been comparatively inappropriate that the Ethiopian should have received the Gospel in the holy city, and amid the solemnities of God's worship. Far more conformable was it with the then state of the Christian Dispensation, that the voice which preached Jesus to him should be "a voice crying in the wilderness," the free breezes of which were a sort of symbol of the freedom with which God's Word went

forth to the ends of the earth, and proposed itself for the acceptance of all mankind.

This may have been the *reason* of the arrangement. The *practical teaching* of it is obvious. Men may, and often do, find God where they least expect to meet Him. We may sometimes come across Him in the desert, when we have failed to encounter Him at Jerusalem. There is a difference in this respect between the laws of Nature and those of Grace. In nature the effect is rigidly tied to the means, and never produced except through the instrumentality of the means. Harvests never spring without suns, dews, and rains. Plants never thrive unless the air is freely admitted to them. But we cannot say that good and saving impressions upon the spirit of man are *limited* to the Ordinances of Grace. We cannot say that a spiritual blessing is to be found nowhere but in Prayer, or in the Study of the Scriptures, or in Public Worship, or in Holy Communion. It is not so. "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" and the Spirit of God is often pleased to act independently of His ordained channels. A casual interview with a stranger, a book read on a journey, some striking incident of Providence or scene of nature, has often proved a

means of grace to a soul, where sermons and sacraments have failed. The avenues by which God reaches the hearts of men are almost as various as their characters. An eminent servant of His, speaking of the means by which the earliest religious impression was made upon his heart, tells us, "that in the winter, seeing  
" a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering  
" that within a little time the leaves would be  
" renewed, and after that the flowers and fruit  
" appear, he received a high view of the Provi-  
" dence and power of God, which had never  
" since been effaced from his soul; that this  
" view had perfectly set him loose from the  
" world, and kindled in him such a love for  
" God, that he could not tell whether it had  
" increased in above forty years that he had  
" lived since <sup>1</sup>."

The passage of Scripture which the eunuch was reading, occurs in the fifty-third chapter of the Prophet Isaiah. There may have been a reason for his pitching upon that part of the Prophetical writings. The Jews divided the Pentateuch into fifty-four sections, one of which

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Conversations of Brother Lawrence (Masters).*  
A tract which exhibits, in his own language, a character of great simplicity and beauty.

was to be read in the synagogue every Sabbath day. During the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, copies of the Law being interdicted, and the reading of it prohibited, they divided the Prophets into fifty-four sections, and substituted a section of these for the usual section of the Pentateuch. Now the section which begins with the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, embraces also the fifty-sixth. And in the fifty-sixth we find this promise, which, very possibly, being made to persons in his own circumstances, determined the Ethiopian to choose this particular section; "Neither let the son of the stranger, "that hath joined himself to the Lord; speak, "saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me "from His people: *neither let the eunuch say,* "Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the "Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, "and choose the things that please Me, and "take hold of My covenant; even unto them "will I give in Mine house and within My "walls a place and a name better than of sons "and of daughters: I will give them an ever- "lasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also "the sons of the stranger, that join themselves "to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love "the name of the Lord, to be His servants,

“every one that keepeth the Sabbath from  
“polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant;  
“even them will I bring to My holy mountain,  
“and make them joyful in My house of prayer :  
“their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be  
“accepted upon Mine altar ; for Mine house shall  
“be called an house of prayer for all people.”

But whatever motives may have prompted the choice, the text he was engaged upon was one minutely descriptive of the circumstances of Our Lord's Passion. The first part of it found its fulfilment in His silence before Pilate, in His meek reply to the man who struck Him for answering the high priest, and generally in the gentle patience of His demeanour through the whole course of His Passion. The latter part of it, which is somewhat obscure, is probably to be understood thus : “In His humiliation His “judicial power” (power to execute judgment) “was removed.” (When He came to visit us in great humility, He wore not the aspect of Judge ; no one would have known from His outward guise and circumstances, that God had given Him authority to execute judgment.) “But” (though so lowly was His semblance) “who shall declare His generation?” (it is ineffable, for He is the Son of God most high,

begotten from everlasting of the Father), "for "His life is lifted up from the earth<sup>3</sup>,"—not simply taken away, as the life of an ordinary mortal might be, but lifted up from the earth, in reference to the ascending up of Christ to the right hand of the Father, where He was before. And thus, humble though His life was in its outward circumstances, its beginning and end were alike inscrutable and ineffable; as He Himself said, "I came forth from the Father, "and am come into the world; again, I leave "the world, and go unto the Father."—If this be the true meaning of the words, the Ethiopian might well be doubtful to whom they applied. In this view of them, they suit none but Christ. On being asked to whom the Prophet alluded, Philip opened his mouth (the regular phrase for leaving the conversational strain, and beginning a solemn and set discourse; thus Our Lord is said to have "opened his "mouth" in commencing the Sermon on the Mount, and St. Peter to have "opened his "mouth" in preaching to Cornelius), and gave him the good news of Jesus, the Saviour, in

<sup>3</sup> This explanation of the passage (the best I have ever seen) is Mr. Humphry's. See the admirable note in his Commentary on the Acts, *ad loc.* (*J. W. Parker*).

whom these words of ancient prophecy were fulfilled. If he followed his text closely, the Articles of the Creed to which he must have given prominence in his discourse, must have been the Divine Sonship of Our Lord, His conception of the Holy Ghost, His birth of the Virgin, His suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return to judgment.—a pretty complete summary of the second paragraph. But there are also Articles in the third paragraph, which he cannot have avoided touching upon. For, first, there is surely a great significance in the name, when we are told that Philip preached, not Christ, the Messiah of the Jews, but “Jesus,” the personal name of Our Blessed Lord, given Him by the angel Gabriel before His conception, on the ground that He should save His people from their sins. He preached therefore the salvation from sin’s guilt and power, which is in Christ; a salvation which involves, as its first step, the forgiveness of sins through Christ’s Blood. And since he subsequently baptized the eunuch, and Christian Baptism is into the Triune Name, he must also have been explicit with him, one would think, upon the person and office of the Holy Ghost. And thus, scanty as are our

materials for conjecturing the course of Philip's argument—limited, indeed, to the facts that he preached from a certain text, that he preached Jesus, and that immediately after preaching he administered Baptism—so very pregnant are the brief notices of Holy Scripture, that we are not much at a loss for the substance of his sermon. It maintained, no doubt, the character of all the sermons recorded in the Book of the Acts, being strictly an announcement of good tidings, of certain facts which had transpired in the history of the world, and of the moral and spiritual significance annexed to them. And it showed, as all these sermons do show, how these facts had occurred on a plan preconcerted by the wisdom of God, and how Prophecy was fulfilled in the career of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Ethiopian drank in the good news with eager ears, and on their coming to a piece of water, inquired whether there was any objection to his being formally enrolled among the disciples of the new Faith by the Sacrament of Baptism. We know that a certain baptism, or purification by water, was used by the Jews at the admission of proselytes. Acquainted with the Jewish ritual, the eunuch might hence have gathered that a similar rite would be necessary for

initiation into the *Christian Faith* ; or he might, when in Jerusalem, have heard of baptism as the mode of admission actually practised in the new sect ; or, much more probably, Philip himself might have woven into his discourse Our Lord's parting command to the disciples, to go " teach " all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the " Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." " If *all* nations, what doth hinder *me* to be " baptized?" the Ethiopian might have thought. " It is true that I belong to a race, over which " the cloud of God's malediction lowers. It is " true that I am a descendant of Ham, not of " Japheth, whom God promised to enlarge, much " less of Shem, in whose tents God promised to " dwell. Still the commission is ample enough " to enclose me within its folds, it was a com- " mission to teach and baptize *all* nations ; God, " in His good Providence, has already thrown a " teacher in my way, who has guided me into " the knowledge of His truth. What then doth " hinder me from submitting to the second part " of His Ordinance, and being baptized ?"

Philip making no objection to the Ethiopian's proposal, (what objection was possible ? How could there be a moment's hesitation ? Had not God brought him to this spot for the

very purpose of admitting this stranger to the Church? Had not his journey been prescribed by an angel? his interview with the stranger dictated by the Spirit? And was not the appearance of water by the roadside, just as the eunuch's mind had opened to the faith in Christ, a Providential indication of what God would now have him to do?) the driver of the chariot is stopped, and the Evangelist and his illustrious convert descend from it. Then stepping into the water which lay along the roadside, Philip administered the Sacrament of Baptism to this "stranger," who thus, for the second time, and in a closer and more vital union, was "joined unto the Lord." Eusebius asserts that in his time (the middle of the fourth century) there was a village on the road from Jerusalem to Hebron, at the twentieth milestone, which was said to be the scene of the eunuch's baptism. Jerome (writing more than half a century later) adds that the spring which issued out from the base of the mountain, near this village, was absorbed by the ground in which it rises<sup>4</sup>, a particular about which the earlier writer is silent.

<sup>4</sup> These particulars are from Bp. Pearson's *Five Lectures on the Acts* (Crowfoot's Ed., Deighton, 1851), pp. 74, 75.

"They state that the fountain in which he" (the eunuch)

We now turn to some of the practical reflections to which the passage gives rise.

1. We have remarked already upon the spiritual freedom which characterizes the whole incident—its scene, not the Temple, not a Christian congregation, but the wilderness; its time, not (so far as we know) one of the stated hours of prayer, not a Sabbath, or a festival, but a work-day, when men may harness horses to chariots and go a journey; the minister, not an Apostle, and in fact only one of those who had been solemnly designated by

“was baptized was near Bethsoron; so at least Eusebius;  
 “‘And there is now a village Bethsoron in the road from  
 “‘Ælia to Chebron, at the 20th distance-mark, where a  
 “‘spring also is shown coming out of the mountain, in which  
 “‘the eunuch of Candace is said to have been baptized by  
 “‘Philip;’ which St. Jerome thus interprets: ‘And there is  
 “‘at this day a village, Bethsoron, in the road from Ælia to  
 “‘Chebron, at the 20th milestone, near which a spring  
 “‘issuing at the base of the mountain *is absorbed by the same*  
 “‘*ground in which it rises*; and in this the Acts of Apostles  
 “‘relate that the eunuch of Candace was baptized by Philip:’  
 “‘where two things are to be remarked; that Jerome in the  
 “‘first place added, ‘that it is absorbed by the same ground in  
 “‘which it rises,’ which he might add of his own knowledge;  
 “‘secondly, ‘that the Acts of the Apostles relate the circum-  
 “‘stance;’ which neither Eusebius said, nor the Acts sub-  
 “‘stantiate.” Jerome’s additions seem to furnish a good in-  
 stance how a statement made at second hand swells in the  
 mouth of him who retails it.

the Apostles to a more or less secular ministration. But with all this independence of outward circumstance, we cannot help remarking certain great features in this procedure of Divine Grace, which are the same as those we find every where. Our Lord's Commission to His Apostles, who represented His Church, was to teach (or make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He had said also to an inquirer, who came to Him for instruction; "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And St. Paul speaks of Christ as "sanctifying and cleansing the Church with the washing of water by the Word." Two elements, according to these passages, enter into the idea of admission into the Church of Christ. There is, first, an action of the Word of God upon the conscience. There is, secondly, the outward visible sign of washing with water. Now both these are found in the passage before us. There is, first, the action of the Word of God, as spoken by St. Philip, on the Ethiopian's conscience. Philip, it is true, preached not in a church, but in a carriage; not to many souls;

but to one man with a few attendants; still it was preaching to all intents and purposes; he “preached unto him Jesus,” he expounded the Prophetical Scriptures, and showed how they testified of the Saviour. But this was not all; there were the Sacraments of God also, prepared for, introduced, ushered in by His Word. St. Philip did not simply evangelize the eunuch, he baptized him also. So that in the eunuch’s chariot there was, for the time being, a visible Church, according to the definition of that term which occurs in our Nineteenth Article; “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ’s Ordinance.” “A congregation!” you will say. “But how a congregation in any true sense of the word? How can the name be applied to a casual encounter between a minister of Christ and a single inquiring soul?” The answer is, that Our Lord has Himself defined for us the congregation, to which He attaches the blessing of His Presence, and that St. Philip and the eunuch fall under the definition; “Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.”

The eunuch was inquiring about Christ; Philip was preaching Christ in answer to the eunuch's inquiries;—was not this a being gathered together in His Name? And was not His covenanted Presence assuredly with them? A smaller congregation could not be, and yet the seed of the Word fell on an honest and good heart, which kept it, and doubtless brought forth fruit with patience. Manifold are the uses of God's Word; and perhaps this very passage may have been intended to console and encourage some of His ministers, when listeners are very few, and congregations very thin. One earnest, inquiring listener is far better, and yields far more return of our labour, than a hundred who sit through the sermon in deference to the claims of religion, but with no real desire to learn. Our purpose, however, at present, is to remark that, notwithstanding its free and elastic spirit, which makes it independent of circumstances, and adapts it to the exigencies of all times, Christianity does not dispense with its two main agencies, which remain a constant element among all its changes of form,—the Word and Sacraments of God.

2. Another point to which attention should

be called in this narrative, is the administration of Baptism immediately on the demand for it being made. St. Philip had had but one opportunity of speaking to the Ethiopian, and it would have been impossible for him in one address to have traversed the whole field of Christian Truth. The religious knowledge of his convert must have been very immature, if it were only that it was so recently acquired. Yet no pause is interposed before his admission to discipleship. Without a moment's delay, and before they had arrived at their journey's end, the Sacrament is administered. The same feature of what we should judge to be prematureness in the administration of Baptism comes out even more strikingly in the dealings of St. Paul with the Philippian Gaoler. In an agony of terror—spiritual, no doubt, to a certain extent, but at the same time partly natural, and aroused by the circumstance of the earthquake and the opening of the prison doors,—the gaoler had drunk in the teaching of Paul and Silas, when “they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, “and to all that were in his house.” He was a heathen, this gaoler; a heathen, moreover, degraded and brutalized by the cruelties incidental to his position; his previous knowledge

of Christianity must have been confined to what he had gathered from rumours about the town as to the teaching of these Jewish visitors, and from what had transpired when they were taken before the magistrates—the trepidation excited by the events of the night must have made it impossible for him to give much quiet thought to the glad tidings of the Gospel; reasonably, as it appears, might Paul and Silas have postponed his baptism till the morning, when his excitement had subsided; but, instead of this, the sacred narrative marks emphatically that there was no delay: “And he took them *the same hour of the night*, and washed their stripes; “and was baptized, he and all his, *straight-way* ;” baptized out of the first vessel that came to hand,—a prison bowl, perhaps, in which was doled out to the prisoners their pittance of water. Such was the urgency with which the thing was done.

Now we must not apply these and similar passages thoughtlessly to modern administrations of Baptism, without considering the great difference of the Church’s circumstances. The angelic message which directed Philip to the desert, and the miraculous circumstances which preceded and paved the way for the conversion

of the gaoler, no doubt warranted a more precipitate admission of these converts than might be proper or judicious now-a-days ; a man who acts under the visible guidance and sanction of Heaven need not be so cautious and deliberate as one who has no guide but his own enlightened reason, and the long since stereotyped order of the Church ; still, the general principle involved in these narratives may be safely taken as our rule of action now. And the principle is this, that Baptism is matriculation in the School of Christ, and that we are not to delay that matriculation till a person has knowledge enough to become a graduate in the School. In the Baptismal Commission, the teaching which qualifies for Baptism is clearly distinguished from that which succeeds it. The first is simply heralding Christ, in His offices of Grace, to those who know Him not ; the second is a building up of those who have embraced Him upon this report, in the perfect knowledge of His will. The first involves nothing more than the announcement of a few leading articles of the Creed, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and that through His Blood we have forgiveness. Where there is any evident susceptibility of

conscience to this announcement, any opening of the heart to a preached Jesus, there, however unformed the present views of the catechumen may be, we may proceed to Baptism, and thus give him a title to further instruction. It is not the amount of his knowledge which is to be looked to, so much as his spiritual receptivity. A man whose heart is opened, as the eunuch's was, as Lydia's was, as the gaoler's was, learns with a wonderful rapidity. A little infinitesimal grain of saving Truth wings its way, in this case, through the moral system, and entirely renews him in the spirit of his mind. Only let such an one (and let us all) remember that Baptism is not the completion, but merely the earliest beginning, of Christian training. Nor is even Confirmation its completion. We are all to be learners in Christ's School to the end of our lives. The furthest advanced among us may and must grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, by devout and thoughtful use of the Holy Scriptures, and by devout and thoughtful attendance upon preaching. And let me add that, as in Nature, so in Grace, growth is the only satisfactory evidence of life.

3. Last, but not least in importance, it is much to be observed that the passage of Scrip-

ture which the Ethiopian called upon St. Philip to expound, and which proved, under God's Spirit, the means of his conversion, is one which describes the meek and resigned Passion of Christ. A similar attractiveness has often been experienced in this particular part of the Gospel testimony. Lord Rochester told Burnet respecting this very chapter of Isaiah, that "as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which did so enlighten his mind, and convince him, that he could resist it no longer; for the words had an authority which did shoot, like rays or beams, into his mind; so that he was not only convinced by the reasons he had about it, which satisfied his understanding, but by a power, which did so effectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had seen Him in the clouds." Egede, the Danish missionary to Greenland, having laboured there fifteen years without success, withdrew in sorrow and disappointment, after preaching a farewell sermon from those words of the Prophet; "I said, I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought

<sup>5</sup> *Burnet's Life of Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, p. 65. (London, T. Davies, Russell Street, Covent Garden. 1774.)

“and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.” It would appear that his care had been to inculcate amendment of life and the future judgment, rather than any more distinctively Christian doctrines<sup>6</sup>. Two years after his departure, one

<sup>6</sup> In his *Description of Greenland* (2nd Ed., Allman, Princes Street, Hanover Square, 1818), he says (pp. 216, 217):—

“It is a matter which cannot be questioned, that if you will make a Christian out of a mere savage and wild man, you must first make him a reasonable man, and the next step will be easier. This is authorized and confirmed by our Saviour’s own method. He makes a beginning from the earthly things; He proposes the mysteries of the Kingdom of God in parables and similitudes. The first care taken in the conversion of heathens is to remove out of the way all obstacles which may hinder their conversion, and render them *unfit to receive the Christian doctrine*, before any thing can successfully be undertaken in their behalf. . . . They should also be kept *under some discipline*, and restrained from their foolish superstitions, and from the silly tricks and wicked impostures of their *angekkuts*” (prophets) which ought to be altogether prohibited and punished . . . Is it not allowed in the Church of Christ to make use of Christian discipline at times and seasons, with prudence and due moderation; which is a powerful means to advance the growth of piety and devotion? *How much more is it necessary to apply the same means here to grub up an untilled ground, where a new Church is to be planted! Else it would be the same imprudence as to throw good seed into thorns and briars, which would choke the seed.*”

This extract sufficiently indicates the principles on which

of the missionaries whom he left behind (a Moravian) was copying a translation of the New Testament into the Greenland language. A few of the wild natives, who arrived while he was thus engaged, asked what he was writing, and the missionary read to them the narrative of Our Lord's agony in the garden. One of the savages, by name Kajarnak, came up to the table, and exclaimed with great vehemence; "How was it? Let me hear it again: I too wish to be saved!" This was the beginning of missionary success in Greenland. We are told that Kajarnak often came to be taught about Christ; and that, while he listened, the tears would roll down his cheeks; that he per-

Egede thought it right to administer a mission among the heathen. This most devoted and zealous pastor was born in 1686; resigned his living in Norway, and went out to Greenland, to found a new Christian settlement there, in 1721; returned to Copenhagen disappointed (as mentioned above) in 1736; and died (at the age of seventy-two) in 1758. Three years before his leaving Greenland (i.e., in 1733) two Moravian missionaries had joined him there; and in 1734 two more followed, who remained after he had taken his departure. It was one of these last, by name John Beck, who was the instrument in the conversion of Kajarnak, as mentioned above. The story may be found in Barth's *Christian Missions* (Religious Tract Society, Vol. Asia and America, p. 213), and with somewhat more of detail in *The History of Hans Egede, and Moravian Missionaries*. (Boston, 1845.)

suaded three other families to come and be taught also ; that when the missionaries could not find the words they wanted, he used to help them out of the fulness of his heart ; and that with his last breath he talked of Our Lord's dying love. It would seem that just as it was the announcement of Christ's *humiliation*,—of His being cradled in a manger,—which on His birth-night wakened up a full burst of praise from the heavenly choir ;—as they were silent till the announcing angel struck that chord,—so the human heart gives not forth its affections, does not surrender unreservedly to God, till the doctrine of Christ's Passion is applied to it. Our Lord's own words seem to claim a special attractiveness for His Cross ; “ I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw “ all men unto Me. This He said, signifying “ what death He should die.”

And a similar thought seems to underlie the expression of St. Paul, “ I determined not to “ know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, “ and ” (as if the great secret of efficiency were not in Jesus Christ pre-existent, nor in Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary, nor in Jesus Christ raised from the dead) “ *Him crucified.*” There is no doubt a depth of pathos in the

narrative of the Cross, which we seek for in vain in other parts of the Evangelical testimony. We shall know and feel it so to be, if we will hang the crucifix every where upon the walls of our mind—I mean, if we make His sufferings in all their details the object of our contemplation, praying, as we do so, for that Spirit, which can only flow forth to us from His pierced Side.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF THE RAPTURE OF ST. PHILIP AND OF THE EUNUCH.

“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and [in the original for] he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.”—ACTS viii. 39, 40.

*AND when they were come up out of the water.* The eunuch, converted as he was before Cornelius, was the earliest firstfruits of the Gentile Church. His baptism, therefore, was a remarkable epoch in the Church's history, and, as such, was to be authenticated by a remarkable operation of the Spirit of God, both upon the subject and upon the administrator of it.

The subject of it went on his way rejoicing, apparently so transported with holy and spiritual joy, that he noticed not the removal of the missionary. In order to connect this joy with the operation of the Holy Ghost, we have only to

remember that joy is named by St. Paul as one of the firstfruits of the Spirit; "The fruit of the Spirit is love, *joy*, peace."

The missionary himself was transported in the body to another region, where work of another character awaited him; and this transportation is expressly ascribed to the Spirit; "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." The word is the same as that which St. Paul employs to speak of his own rapture into the third heaven, and into paradise ("*caught up to the third heaven,*" "*caught up into paradise*"); only there the region into which he was caught away was invisible and heavenly, and the Apostle himself did not know whether at the time he was "in the body, or "out of the body." Here, the transportation was merely to another spot of earth; and it was clearly "in the body." Again the same word is used, where it is said that at the Lord's Second Advent, immediately after the resurrection of the dead in Christ, "we, which are alive "and remain, shall be *caught up* together with "them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the "air." Here the transport spoken of, will be a transport of the risen and glorified body, not to another spot of earth, but into the air. The

more complete parallel to St. Philip's case is to be found in the writings of Ezekiel, where we read on several occasions, that "the Spirit took him up," "lifted him up, and took him away;" "put forth the form of an hand and took him by a lock of his head; and lifted him up between the earth and the heaven, and brought him in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate." And that the prophets underwent a transport of this kind frequently, so much so that persons conversant with them could not always feel certain of their whereabouts, may be gathered from the apprehensive words which Obadiah addressed to Elijah; "It shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the *Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee* whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me;" and again, from the petition respecting Elijah, which was addressed to Elisha; "Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master; lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley."

Thus, then, the reception of this child of

Ham into the Church of Jesus Christ was authenticated by a twofold operation of the Spirit, ordinary and extraordinary,—a rapture of the eunuch's mind—a rapture of St. Philip's body.

There is something very striking and solemn in this instantaneous confirmation of Baptism. It reminds us of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Our Lord, immediately after His Baptism, in bodily shape like a dove. And we may parallel with it the old legend, if indeed it be nothing more than legend, that at St. Augustine's baptism, he and the administrator of it, St. Ambrose<sup>1</sup>, were so filled with the Holy Spirit

<sup>1</sup> "The story is this, as Spondanus, a favourer of it, reports "it out of Dacius : That when St. Austin was baptized by St. Ambrose, whilst they were at the font, they sung this hymn "by inspiration, as the Spirit gave them utterance, and so "published it in the sight and audience of all the people."

But "it is replied by learned men, that the pretended "Chronicon of Dacius" (out of which Spondanus got the story), "is a mere counterfeit, and altogether spurious " . . . . at least five hundred years younger than its reputed "author." (Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol. ii. pp. 691 b. 692 a. Bohn, York Street, 1852). Bingham thinks that "the most rational conclusion" (as to the authorship of the *Te Deum*) "is that of Bishop Stillingfleet, that it "was composed by Nicettus" (or Nicetius), "bishop of Triers "(Trèves) who lived about the year 535; and that we must "look on this hymn as owing its original to the Gallican "Church." The Benedictine editors of the works of Hilary,

of God, that they burst forth alternately into that jubilant hymn of praise, which has been preserved and used ever since in the Church under the name of the "Te Deum."

We will first offer some thoughts upon the bodily transport of the Evangelist, and then upon the mental transport of his convert.

Bishop of Poitiers (355), attribute it to him; and this claim, though placing the author nearly two hundred years before Nicetius, would still leave the credit of the composition to the Gallican Church. Mr. Blunt's view (*Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, Part I., Rivingtons, 1866), is very interesting, and probably the true one. He finds evident traces of the Te Deum in (1) St. Cyprian's treatise "on the Mortality" at Carthage (A.D. 252). "Ah, perfect and perpetual bliss! There is the glorious company of the Apostles; there is the fellowship of the Prophets exulting; there is the innumerable multitude of martyrs, crowned after their victory of strife and passion"; and (2) in the Alexandrine MS. of the Holy Scriptures (in the British Museum), now generally assigned to the fifth century. In this MS., after the Psalter, there is a Morning Hymn "still used in the daily office of the Greek Church," which seems to be an amalgamation of the "Gloria in Excelsis" in our Communion Service, with certain verses of the Te Deum (e.g., "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep me this day without sin") and others from the Psalms. Hence Mr. Blunt infers, "The most probable conclusion to arrive at is, that this noble canticle, *in its present form*, is a composition of the fourth or fifth century; and that it represents a still more ancient hymn, of which traces are to be found in St. Cyprian and in the Morning Hymn of the Alexandrine Manuscript." (Blunt's *Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, footnote to p. 11.)

I. The event which occurred to St. Philip was miraculous, and such as does not occur now-a-days. But we may learn important lessons from it, doctrinal and practical.

1. It teaches, in consonance with other parts of God's Word, that *there may be an operation of the Spirit upon the body of man*. Perhaps this is a truth which hardly enters into the circle of our religious ideas. The Apostle indeed writes; "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" evidently recognizing the body, no less than the spirit and soul, as capable of sanctification. And again, he represents the change which is to be wrought upon the Christian's body at the Resurrection, as due to the operation of the same Spirit, which already dwells in his soul. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also *quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you*." But these expressions are not easily adjusted with the popular theology. We commonly regard the body as the great encumbrance and clog upon the spirit, and as

the great hindrance to the aspirations of piety. We confound it in thought with the flesh, and most unscripturally look to our disenthralment from it by death, instead of our resumption of it at the Resurrection, as the great consummation of our nature. St. Paul felt painfully the infirmities of the body, and the depressing influence exerted by those infirmities on the mind; "We that are in this tabernacle," he writes, "do groan, being burdened;" but he immediately cautions us against supposing that the laying down of the body at death was the object of his desire; "*not for that we would be unclothed*, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

The Apostle shuddered at the thought of dissolution, as we all must do; what he longed for was to be clothed upon with the Resurrection Body, "that house from heaven," which shall be a meet and suitable tenement for the glorified soul. Nor, while he felt acutely the burden of the flesh, did he ignore the possibility even at present of consecrating the body to God, or the noble uses which, so consecrated, it may serve. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present *your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,

“which is your reasonable service.” Let us frame our view of the body, then, upon St. Paul’s. Let us give to it its due place in the circle of our responsibilities, our hopes, our prospects. Let us regard it as having been solemnly dedicated to God in Baptism, as a temple for His indwelling, and an instrumentality for His service. Let us consecrate our eyes to Him by mortifying the lust of the eyes, and by the devout study of His oracles and His works of nature; our ears, by turning them from flatteries and sinful enticements, and by opening them to His Word; our hands, by labouring in our vocation, and by giving alms; our feet, by making them carry us on errands of mercy; our mouths, by setting a watch over them, and employing them to tell forth His praise. And when, beset by weariness or pain, the laggard body refuses to obey the motions of the willing spirit, let us turn this also to account by sighing and longing, and praying for that blessed time, when “the Saviour, the Lord “Jesus Christ, shall change our vile body, that “it may be fashioned like unto His glorious “body, according to the working whereby He “is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

2. There is something very instructive in the circumstance of St. Philip's vanishing as soon as his mission was accomplished, and leaving the Ethiopian in enjoyment of his newly-found treasure. The human minister, having put him into possession of Christ, leaves him alone with Christ. It should be the ambition of every minister to do the same. The more his Master is esteemed by the hearers, and the less he himself is seen or thought of, the more faithfully and commendably his ministry is fulfilled. John the Baptist (though he lived only in the twilight dawn of our dispensation) is in this, as in other points, a great model for the Christian minister. He pointed his disciples away from himself to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and without a single pang of envy saw them following the Lamb, and seeking to acquaint themselves with Him. And when informed that the tide of popular favour was drawing off from his ministry, and that Christ was superseding him in men's minds and hearts, the high-souled prophet accepted the announcement with joy, most willing to be nothing, so as only Christ was all; "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth

“and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of “the bridegroom’s voice : this my joy therefore “is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must “decrease.” And the Apostle Paul, who, if any minister was entitled to do so, might have obtruded his own pretensions upon his converts, distinctly disavows doing so ; “We preach not “ourselves,” says he, “but Christ Jesus, our Lord, “and ourselves your servants, for Jesus’ sake.”

And may we not venture a step further, and say that one reason why Our Lord Himself, while on earth, was so reticent on the subject of His Atoning Work, may have been that even He would not preach Himself? He testified abundantly of the Father, and most explicitly also of the Comforter ; but as for Himself, He was to be exhibited, not by Himself, but by His inspired Apostles. Can any circumstance more clearly prove that the human minister ought himself to vanish as much as possible from the minds of men, that Christ may fill the whole field of view ?

And let me add that, while the minister may not *personally* obtrude himself, it is quite possible that he may thrust *his office* into a prominence which does not belong to it. Taking the highest estimate of it (and no one who frames his views

on Holy Scripture will take a low one), the ministerial office is only instrumental. It is the ordained channel for conducting souls to Christ, and putting them into communion with Him. But nothing is easier, and nothing more disturbs the whole doctrinal system of religion, than the erection of means into ends. Let us be on our guard against such misrepresentations of truth. I am not denying for a moment that in any regular course of religious instruction the commission of the Christian Minister, with his duties, responsibilities, prerogatives, authority, should be fully considered in its turn. I only say that Christ did not send us to preach His *Ministry* as the great central Truth, but to preach *Himself*, and His ministry as leading up to Him by an ordained and consecrated instrumentality. All tendency to undue exaltation of the Christian Priesthood will be effectually checked, if the point of view be right. Ministers exist for the sake of the Church, not the Church for the sake of Ministers. "Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas "are yours." "He gave some Apostles, and "some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and "some Pastors and Teachers; for the *perfecting* "of the saints, for the *work* of the ministry, for "the *edifying of the body of Christ.*"

II. We now come to the mental transport of the convert of St. Philip. We are told that "the eunuch saw him no more;" *for* (so it is in the original) "he went on his way rejoicing; but Philip was found at Azotus." The Evangelist was carried away in one direction; his convert proceeded on his journey home in another; for which reason they never met again—this may be the force of the "*for*". Or, as others interpret it, we may understand some words after "saw him no more," which will explain the particle; "the eunuch saw him no more—indeed he did not care to see him, *for* he went on his way rejoicing;" his own ecstasy was so great as to prevent his noticing Philip's departure. Any how, the passage implies that the joy of the new convert entirely occupied him, so that St. Philip was not missed.

And this is a very observable fact, and one which claims a remark or two. We do not usually think well of those who are unmindful of their benefactors in things temporal. But he who, like St. Philip, confers a spiritual benefit upon others—he who points us to, and puts us in possession of, the hidden treasure of the Gospel, does he not, more than any temporal benefactor, deserve to be held by us in ever-

lasting remembrance? Assuredly. There is no earthly tie more pure, none more enduring, than that which binds the disciple of Christ to one who has begotten him through the Gospel, who has been to him his father in Christ Jesus. But in judging of the eunuch's state of mind, we are to remember that St. Philip was a perfect stranger to him, and that the interview between them had perhaps scarcely lasted a single hour. There had been no time for any feeling of attachment to grow up between them; this sudden coming and going of the Gospel messenger invested him with the appearance of an angel from Heaven. Bear in mind also that a new and glorious field had been opened to the eunuch, in which his thoughts might delightfully expatiate. He had the scroll of the prophet Isaiah with him in his chariot; and Philip having given him the key to the prophecy, every perplexed passage seems to open, as he applies the key for himself; Christ, the new-found treasure of his soul, is seen in every verse and line. It seems to me as if God would give us in the eunuch a specimen of joy purely and perfectly spiritual in its character. If affectionate regard to the human minister had entered into it, as it must have done, had that minister been for a

longer time associated with him, the sentiment would not have been as pure. As it is, the joy of Christ's salvation, the deep absorbing interest of exploring this new-found treasure in the Word of God, this was all in all with him; there was just at present no room for other thoughts in his mind. I suppose that, like all strong emotions, this early tumult of joy settled down sooner or later into a more tranquil frame. And then the eunuch, on his return to entire self-possession, would notice, as he had hardly done before, the removal of St. Philip. The observation would, no doubt, confirm his faith. This man, he would naturally think, so miraculously taken from me, must have been miraculously sent to me in the Providence of God. His extraordinary disappearance, as soon as his work was done, authenticates his Divine mission. It was no chance traveller whom I picked up in my route. It was God who threw that good man in my way. Then would come speculations as to who he was, whether really a man, as he seemed, or only an angel in the guise of man, of which, as the good Ethiopian must have known, there had been many instances in Old Testament story. And then, perhaps, the feeling that, if he were indeed a man, the pleasant

communion and intercourse between them had only been broken off for a season, and not even that spiritually. He was now a member of one Body with this Christian missionary, and partaker of one Spirit with him; he was animated by a common hope of glory, owned a common Lord, confessed one Faith, shared in one Baptism, called one God Father, and looked up to that God with the same filial confidence and affection. And this spiritual union, he might think, was the pledge of a mutual recognition hereafter in the Kingdom of Glory, when he should have the opportunity of acknowledging his debt to Philip, and when both should look back upon that Baptism in the wilderness as the most deeply interesting and critical passage of their lives.

I cannot pass on, Reader, without inviting you to put the question to yourself, whether there are in you even the elements of a pure spiritual joy. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy." Joy is the great evidence of having received Christ sincerely to the saving of the soul. When the Samaritans received the Gospel, "there was great joy in that city." When the eunuch had found the pearl of great price, he went on his way *rejoicing*. When the gaoler of Philippi had been baptized

by his prisoners, he brought them into his house, "and set meat before them, and *re-joiced*, believing in God with all his house." Can we, then, give this evidence of sincere adhesion to Christ? Let us not deceive ourselves in giving the answer. In days when health is high, animal spirits in full flow, circumstances good, friends many and kind, relations sympathizing—in a word, in the sunshine of life, it is quite possible to mistake for spiritual joy that sense of God's goodness, and that general contentment with persons and things around us, which is simply the natural expansion of the heart under the warmth of prosperity. This is the experience of happiness, not the experience of joy. Happiness is fed by external circumstances<sup>2</sup>, not from an internal spring.

<sup>2</sup> "Happiness, according to the original use of the term, is "that which *happens*, or comes to one by a *hap*; that is, by "an outward befalling, or favourable condition. Some good "is conceived, out of the soul, which comes to it as a happy "visitation, stirring in the receiver a pleasant excitement. "It is what money yields, or will buy—dress, equipage, "fashion, luxuries of the table; or it is settlement in life— "independence, love, applause, admiration, honour, glory, or "the more conventional and public benefits of rank, political "standing, victory, power. All these stir a delight in the "soul, which is not of the soul, or its quality, but from with- "out. Hence they are looked upon as happening to the "soul, and, in that sense, create *happiness*. . . . .

Now see the contrast; "Moreover, brethren, "we do you to wit of the grace of God "bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how "that, *in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty* "abounded unto the riches of their liberality." The circumstances all adverse, "a great trial "of affliction;" "deep poverty;" but the spirit all radiant, transported with an exuberance of joy and liberality to others; is there any thing the least like this in your experience,—in mine? Is there even the promise of it? In our studies, on our knees, with our Bibles, do we know what it is to pass an hour of deep in-

"But joy differs from this, as being of the soul itself, originating in its quality. And this appears in the original "form of the word, which, instead of suggesting a *hop*, "literally denotes a *leap* or *spring*. The Latin has *exult*, "which literally means a *leaping forth*. The radical idea, "then, of joy is this—that the soul is in such order and "beautiful harmony, has such springs of life opened in its "own blessed virtues, that it pours forth a sovereign joy from "within. The motion is outward, not toward, as we conceive "it to be in happiness. It is not the bliss of condition, but "of character. The soul has a light in its own luminous "centre, where God is, which gilds the darkest nights of "external adversity—a music charming all the stormy discords of outward injury and pain into beats of rhythm and "melodies of peace." (*The New Life*, by Horace Bushnell, D.D., p. 148. London, Strahan & Co., 1862.)

terest, of holy elevation of feeling, in the realization of Christ's Love? Believe me, it is no unpractical question which I am asking, for it is in no other power than that of holy joy that we can surmount the temptations and difficulties which beset our path. It is in no other spirit than that of joy that we can render an acceptable homage to God. "Be ye not sorry;" says Nehemiah (and perhaps no word of deeper spiritual significance is to be found in either Testament), "*for the joy of the Lord is your strength.*" A joyless religion is a nerveless one.

But we must hasten to the close of the Acts of St. Philip—to the close of his *Acts*, I say; for we shall see him yet once again, settled and with his family round him, entertaining the historian St. Luke, and no doubt furnishing him orally with the interesting incident we have considered.

"But Philip was found at Azotus"—or Ashdod. This had been formerly one of the chief cities<sup>3</sup> of the Philistines, nominally within the

<sup>3</sup> "The five chief cities of the Philistines" (Gaza, Ashdod (or Azotus), Ashkelon, Gath, Ekron) "had, as early as the days of Joshua, constituted themselves into a confederacy, restricted, however, in all probability, to matters of offence and defence. Each was under the government of a prince,

territory of the tribe<sup>4</sup> of Judah, but never really subjugated by the Israelites, and even down to the time of Nehemiah<sup>5</sup> containing a race of aliens. Its importance was derived from its lying on the high road from Palestine to Egypt. "And passing through" (northward), "he preached in all the cities till he came to "Cæsarea." Two cities lying on or near his route were Lydda and Joppa. These we find St. Peter visiting in the course of the next chapter; in the former he healed the paralytic Æneas, in the latter he raised Dorcas or Tabitha

"whose official title was *seren*, and occasionally *sdr*" (translated "lord" in our Authorized Version). "Gaza may be regarded as having exercised an hegemony (supremacy) over the others; for in the lists of the towns it is mentioned the first" (Josh. xiii. 3, Amos i. 7, 8), except where there is an especial ground for giving prominence to another, as in the case of Ashdod (1 Sam. vi. 17). Ekron always stands last, "while Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gath interchange places." (Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. "Philistines.")

It was in the house of Dagon, at Ashdod, that the idol "fell upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord" (1 Sam. v. 3). Dagon was represented with the face and hands of a man, and the tail of a fish.

<sup>4</sup> See Josh. xv. 21. 46, 47.

<sup>5</sup> "In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of *Ashdod*, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of *Ashdod*, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." (Neh. xiii. 23, 24).

from the dead. It appears, therefore, that St. Philip prepared the way for the Apostles in the cities which lay along the coast-line of Palestine, as he had formerly done in Samaria. He it was who first preached Christ in those cities, and admitted to the Church by Baptism such of the inhabitants as joyfully received the glad tidings. St. Peter subsequently visited the Churches thus planted, confirmed them in the Faith, and probably (though this is not stated) laid his hands upon the new converts, as he had done at Samaria, and invoked on them the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Most instructive it is to notice the change in the character of St. Philip's labours. He has had an hour's most interesting and heart-refreshing conversation with the eunuch. It was a bright gleam of spiritual sunshine for him; for he could not question the sincerity of that simple soul's conversion; and it must have occurred to the Evangelist, that through the eunuch, as a man of wealth and rank, it might please God to open a door for the evangelization of Ethiopia. And having been the instrument of this conversion, Philip in prophetic rapture was snatched away, and planted down in an outlying and foreign town, full of heathen associations.

From this circumstance he gathers that he is designed to preach there; and accordingly he opens his mouth once again to give the glad tidings of the Saviour, now no longer to a single soul, but among the townspeople. And this was but the beginning of a series of labours whereby the whole sea-coast of Palestine was evangelized. No doubt the seed of God's Word fell on much good ground in the course of this missionary tour, but no very signal success is recorded.

The lesson is, that in this life periods of spiritual refreshment must ever be succeeded by hard and toilsome work. Pleasant communion with the Ethiopian, whose heart burns within him as we talk with him of Jesus, must be followed by public ministrations among a multitude where, while some receive the Word with joy, some doubt, and others, perchance, sneer. The sweet and ecstatic converse on the Mount of Transfiguration, which made us feel it good for us to be there, must give place to questionings with the scribes in the valley, to spectacles of suffering and cries for relief. The Christian—much more the Christian minister—must not expect to spend his life in a trance of delicious feeling. Deep interests, warm sympathies, holy

and elevating thoughts, will spring up in his mind, like flowers beneath his feet, as he walks in the way of duty ; but the next moment they seem brushed away by the breaking in of toils and cares, which seem to say ; “ Ye are not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you.” Not yet ! but that “ not yet ” leads our thoughts to a happier condition of existence, where rest in the Lord and joy in the Lord shall be unintermittent, —flowing from the light of His countenance and smile, whom “ now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.”

## CHAPTER IX.

### ST. PAUL IN ST. PHILIP'S FAMILY.

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cæsarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."—ACTS xxi. 8—14.

THE last scene of the life of our Evangelist opens at Cæsarea. This city was the political, as Jerusalem was the religious, metropolis of Palestine. It owed its splendour and import-

ance to Herod the Great, who had adorned it with marble palaces, and provided it with a magnificent harbour<sup>1</sup>, in honour of Augustus Cæsar. On a mound in the midst of the city, rose the temple<sup>2</sup> of Cæsar, with statues of the Emperor and of Rome. The history of the Acts of the Apostles records events, which un-

<sup>1</sup> It was called Σεβαστὸς λιμὴν, "the august harbour." Josephus speaks of it in two places (*Ant.*, xv. 9, 6, and *Wars*, i. 21). He tells us it was larger than the Peiræus at Athens; had a great number of arches where the mariners dwelt; a vast quay for a promenade; and six Colossi, three on either side of the entrance.

<sup>2</sup> Of Herod's building idolatrous temples, Josephus says: (*Ant.*, xv. 9, 5) "The submissive behaviour and liberality which he exercised towards Cæsar . . . . obliged him to transgress the customs of his nation, and to set aside many of their laws, by building cities after an extravagant manner, and erecting temples, not in Judæa indeed, for *that would not have been borne*, it being forbidden for us to pay any honour to images, or representations of animals, after the manner of the Greeks; but still he did this in the country [properly] out, of our bounds, and in the cities thereof. The apology which he made to the Jews for these things was this:—That all was done, not out of his own inclinations, but by the commands and injunctions of others, in order to please Cæsar and the Romans; as though he had not the Jewish customs so much in his eye as he had the honour of those Romans, *while yet he had himself entirely in view all the while*, and indeed was very ambitious to leave great monuments of his government to posterity; whence it was that he was so zealous in building such fine cities, and spent such vast sums of money upon them."

dermined and prepared the downfall of these proud monuments of idolatry.

Philip, at the conclusion of the missionary tour which succeeded the conversion of the eunuch, had settled here. From its being the centre of political influence, the residence of the Roman procurator, and of the titular kings of Judæa, and also from the extensive commerce which was facilitated by its harbour, Cæsarea was a most important sphere of missionary operations; while from the Gentile associations of the city, and the Gentile influences at work in it, the Gospel met with less opposition here than at Jerusalem. Cæsarea is noted in Church history as being the place where, by the conversion of Cornelius, the door of faith was first formally opened to the Gentiles. Our Evangelist having taken up his residence in the place some time previously to this great event, it may surprise us that he was not in any way employed in it. But a subordinate minister of the Church, however eminent his gifts, or great his success, would not have been in place here. The formal admission of the Gentiles, as distinct from the sporadic conversion of individual Gentiles here and there, was to be transacted by an Apostle. To St. Peter

had been solemnly entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and his, therefore, it was of right, to admit the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, to the Kingdom. To the Eleven, in the first instance, had been given the charge to make disciples of all nations; and the Ordinance of the Apostolate must not be set aside. So, although Philip was most probably residing in Cæsarea at the time, the angel directs Cornelius, not to him, but to "one Simon, whose surname "is Peter," then residing at Joppa, which was distant a full day's journey. A good evidence, among many others of a similar kind which might be adduced, that God honours His own Ordinances, though He does not tie Himself so rigidly to them as never to do good by other agencies.

This lesson is still more apparent, when we consider in one view the three great openings towards the conversion of the Gentiles which are recorded in the Acts—the three fissures (if I may so express it) in the Jewish swaddling-clothes, which wrapped the infant Church. There was first the conversion of the eunuch by a subordinate minister of the Church, not himself an Apostle, but only of Apostolic appointment. Then very shortly after—perhaps in the

same year—the (neighbourhood of the two events is remarkable) came the conversion of St. Paul. And who was instrumental in this conversion? Neither an Apostle, nor any other minister. The Lord Himself was His own messenger on the occasion; took the case into His own hands. Paul's conversion, like his Apostleship, was "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." It seems as if Our Blessed Lord was minded to commence the Apostolate anew, to make a fresh start for His Church from a second head. The Gentile Churches, which held of Paul, were to have the same august lineage as the Jewish Churches, which held of Peter; for Paul, no less than Peter, had seen the risen Saviour, and had received his commission directly from that Saviour's lips. Yet it is most observable, that though this new beginning had been made, the original Apostolate is not for a moment thrust aside as useless, nor robbed of its dignity. A sanction must be freely given *by it* to the admission of the Gentiles. By *its* ministerial act, that admission must be solemnly avowed to be according to the will of God. Accordingly this was done in the conversion of Cornelius. The angel might

have preached the Gospel to Cornelius ; St. Philip might have preached the Gospel, and administered Holy Baptism to him ; but neither the angel nor St. Philip would have been in place. "Send men to Joppa, and call for one "Simon, whose surname is Peter,"—this is the word. Peter came, and, convinced by all that he had witnessed, and its concurrence with his previous experiences, he set the seal of the original Apostleship to the admission of the Gentiles.

In human systems of theology, we often see on one side a narrow exclusiveness, which hesitates to recognize any good which is done out of the regular channel ; and on the other, a lax and latitudinarian contempt for the ancient and primitive discipline, which is part of the heritage bequeathed to us by the Apostles. But in Holy Scripture we find strictness without stiffness, and freedom combined with rule ; while the Ordinances and appointments of God, (and even those Jewish Ordinances and appointments, which at the promulgation of the New Testament were ready to vanish away,) are maintained in all the honour due to them, the principle is at the same time maintained, that "the wind bloweth where "it listeth," and that the Spirit's operations are

perfectly free, and independent even of that organization, which He has Himself consecrated. It behoves us therefore to aim at a combination of two sentiments, which are not without difficulty combined—wideness of Christian sympathy, with a strict adherence to Church principles, a willingness to recognize the multiplicity of avenues by which God reaches the hearts of men, together with a reverence for those avenues, which are reduced to system and method in His Church. The Eleven, who had continued with Jesus in His temptations, were not the exclusive channels of spiritual blessing to the world. Their own nominees did part of the great work. St. Paul, who was born out of due time into their glorious Brotherhood, did more. And yet their sanction and authorization was required for all that was done.

In this last notice of St. Philip, the Evangelist, though an interesting picture is presented of his domestic life, falls into the background, and the eye of the reader is fixed upon St. Paul. St. Philip is merely part of an incident, which occurred in St. Paul's last journey to Jerusalem. Planetoids, many of which are wandering about in space, sometimes come within the sphere of the attraction of a comet, and are drawn in

towards the larger body. We have something analogous here. Both Stephen and Philip were noted precursors of the great Apostle. Here the last of these is drawn into St. Paul's orbit, and, as far as our power of sight goes, quenched there. The lesser is swallowed up in the greater ministry.

Philip, having settled at Cæsarea, and probably made it for some years the centre of missionary enterprises, must have been a man of note and influence among the Christians there. It was the obvious thing for Paul, when passing through Cæsarea, to go to the house of Philip, and make it his head quarters. The Apostle would find in the Evangelist a man of like mind, and, though in a subordinate capacity, of like mission with himself. And there was another who would take as much delight in Philip's company and derive as much satisfaction from the record of Philip's experiences and successes, as the Apostle himself,—“Luke, the beloved physician,” the writer of the Acts, who was in attendance on St. Paul at this time. In the course of the Apostle's *second* missionary tour, Luke had been left at Philippi, very probably with the view of strengthening and consoling the members of that first European Church, which we know

from the Epistle to the Philippians to have had such a peculiar interest in the eyes of its founder. On the *third* missionary tour, seven years afterwards, St. Luke rejoined St. Paul at this very place, and accompanied him up to the termination of the history of the Acts. For that history he was now collecting materials; and we cannot doubt that, during a residence of several days under Philip's roof, he obtained from him the profoundly interesting narrative of the conversion of the eunuch, which was the grand event of Philip's ministry. How remarkable is this gathering of persons of note in the house of Philip! St. Paul and St. Luke were both there; and to St. Paul and St. Luke, between them, we are indebted for the greater part of the New Testament, in some respects for its most important part. Then there was the Deacon-Evangelist, who, when Stephen had fallen, had stepped into his place in the ranks, and achieved the successes which Stephen would have achieved, had he been spared. St. Philip had been a colleague of St. Stephen's; St. Paul had been one of his murderers; yet here are the colleague and the murderer under the same roof, joining together probably to praise the Martyr's memory, and vying with one

another to emulate his example. We can well understand the refreshment, and the nerve for future effort, which must have been gained from such intercourse as this between kindred spirits; and how St. Paul's loving and sympathetic mind led him to linger at a place, where his ominous journey was beguiled by the hospitalities of the Evangelist; so that though (as we know from the previous chapter) "he *hasted* "to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost," yet "he *tarried* at Cæsarea," as our text assures us, "*many days*,"—inconsistently, it would appear, with that haste.

But the bright lights of life are always chequered with shadows; and Christian life is no exception to the general rule. If there were many consolations and refreshments of spirit in Philip's home, there were also dark shadows of coming trouble projected on its inmates. St. Philip had four daughters, in whom the prediction of the Prophet Joel respecting the Pentecostal outpouring had received a literal accomplishment: "It shall come to pass in the last days, "saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all "flesh: and your sons and *your daughters* shall "prophecy: . . . and on My servants and on "My *handmaidens* I will pour out in those

"days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

These young women had received the gift of prophetic utterance; or in other words, of declaring God's Will (whether in the shape of prediction or precept) by express Revelation; and although from the First Epistle to the Corinthians it would appear that women were not free to exercise this gift in the congregation, doubtless the same objection would not lie against their making a private communication from God to a domestic circle. It is possible that the daughters of St. Philip may have intimated in the first instance the disasters, which should beset the further progress of the Apostle. Or, more probably, the circumstance of their prophesying may only be mentioned as an additional feature of interest attaching to the little circle now gathered in Philip's house. A four-fold ministry is mentioned in the Epistle to the Ephesians as the bequeathment of the ascended Saviour to His Church. "He gave some, *apostles*; and some, *prophets*; and some, *evangelists*; and some, *pastors and teachers*; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ." Now there was an Apostle in Philip's

household, in the person of St. Paul; there was an Evangelist in the person of St. Philip himself; there was a Teacher in the person of St. Luke, who had in all probability acted in that capacity during the seven years of his stay at Philippi; and possibly he intends to intimate by the passage before us, "neither were Prophets wanting; for St. Philip's four daughters, who had devoted themselves to a life of celibacy, had, and occasionally exercised, the gift of Prophecy."

But whether or not we are to understand that these women made any prediction of St. Paul's fortunes, certain it is that such prediction was made under Philip's roof. The prophet Agabus (the same, probably, who, in the eleventh chapter, had come down from Jerusalem to Antioch on another prophetic errand, and with whom therefore St. Paul was already acquainted,) made his appearance one day in Cæsarea, and presented himself on a sudden in the midst of St. Philip's domestic circle. He began with one of those symbolical actions, which the old Prophets were accustomed to use, and which were designed to impress through the senses the truth which they were commissioned to convey. As Samuel laid hold upon the skirt of Saul's mantle, and rent

it, in token that the Lord had rent the kingdom of Israel from the disobedient monarch ; as Ahijah the Shilonite caught the new garment that was on Jeroboam, and, rending it into twelve pieces, gave him ten, in token that God would rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and give ten tribes to him ; as Jeremiah wore, for a time, a girdle of fine linen, and then concealed it in a hole near the Euphrates, where its colours speedily faded, in token that the Lord would mar the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem, however near His people were to His heart ; so Agabus, untying the sash which held together the Apostle's flowing dress, first twisted it round his own hands, and then hampered with it the action of his own feet ; and the attention of the whole company having been riveted by this proceeding, solemnly announced the end of Paul's journey to Jerusalem thus :—" As for the " man whose this girdle is, in this manner shall " the Jews bind him in Jerusalem, and surrender " him into the hands of the Gentiles." His words, in their great scope and purport, were justified by the event. Notwithstanding the reasonable precautions which St. Paul took to avert such a result, about a week after his

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arrival in Jerusalem, his appearance in the Temple was the signal for a popular tumult, which was only quelled by the descent of the Roman garrison from the castle of Antonia. The soldiers saved the Apostle's life, but bound him (according to their custom of close custody) with two chains<sup>3</sup>; and from that time forth down to the period of his arrival in Rome, he was in the hands of the Gentiles. It was, however, the Romans, acting under the instigation of the tumult, not the Jews, who actually bound the Apostle; and again, in point of fact, he rather passed into the hands of the Romans than was formally surrendered to them; an incidental, though a significant, proof that in the interpretation of Prophecy, and indeed of Scrip-

<sup>3</sup> It is one of the singular (minor) coincidences between the lot of St. Peter and St. Paul, that the former, as well as the latter, should have been bound with two chains. See Acts xii. 6.

St. Paul afterwards underwent what was called "free custody" (*libera custodia*), when on coming to Rome he "was suffered to dwell by himself, in his own hired house, with a soldier that kept him" (Acts xxviii. 16. 30). It would appear, however, that even this mild custody involved *being chained* to the soldier; for he speaks of himself to the Jews, who came to hear him in his lodging, as "bound with this chain" (v. 20). Such a check upon personal liberty (involving an impossibility of being alone, even for purposes of devotion) "for two whole years" must have been intolerably irksome.

ture generally, we are to look more to the general scope and purport of a passage than to its mere literal wording.

In Agabus's symbolical exhibition of the circumstance which he was about to predict, we may see an instance of Symbolism under the New Dispensation, which is worthy of remark. A religion wholly devoid of Symbolism—that is, of some representation of spiritual truth to the eye, would not be a religion adapted to the wants of man. Man, though a spiritual being, is not a *purely* spiritual being; he is subject to strong and lively impressions from the senses. He is more vividly affected by a truth when exhibited to the eye, than when it merely reaches the understanding through the ear. It is to meet this constitution of our nature, that God has made Sacraments an essential part of the Christian Religion. In Sacraments the truth is dramatized, and rendered to creatures constituted as we are more effective. Nor are we to suppose that Christian Symbolism must be rigidly confined to the two Sacraments, so that nothing else of a similar kind and with a similar object can ever be allowed in the Christian Church. We believe that the principle of external manifestation of spiritual realities will be found to

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penetrate very deeply into the core of Christianity. What is the most fundamental doctrine of our Religion—the Incarnation—but the manifestation of God to the senses of men, so that they who witnessed it could say; “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; . . . that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you?” The manifestation, therefore, of the spiritual by means of the visible is quite in conformity with what may be called the fundamental law of our Religion. But, on the other hand, this principle, as all Church history shows, has its limits, and may easily be carried to undue and mischievous lengths. The limits are admirably traced in the discourse “of Ceremonies, why some be abolished and some retained,” which is prefixed to the Book of Common Prayer, and may be shortly stated thus:—Ceremonies must not be in excess, so as to become burdensome. They must not be obscure, but simple and significant, “apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God by some notable and special signification, whereby he may be edified.” To which we may add

that, in different nations, Ceremonies will vary with the susceptibility and national character of the people among whom the Church is planted. For our own people, our own Church seems to have prescribed a ritual with admirable wisdom, giving no sanction on the one hand to a bald and naked worship, which derives no assistance from externals; while, on the other, she gives no indulgence to that excessive and morbid love of the symbolical, which is in truth connected with the lust of the eye.

The prophecy of Agabus aroused the anxiety of the Christians of Cæsarea, and specially of St. Paul's companions, for a life so precious to the Church. They gathered round him; they entreated him with tears to alter his purpose, and not to proceed to the spot where such calamities awaited him. They had no doubt a strong argument to allege in support of their advice; for why had Agabus been instigated by the Holy Spirit to deliver the prediction, unless God designed that the result should be averted by a change of conduct on Paul's part? All true prophecies are designed to have a moral effect; if Jonah predicts that within forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown, it is in order that the Ninevites may repent and escape the threatened doom.

And yet the Apostle, notwithstanding all their pleadings, persists in his purpose. It was not from obstinacy that he did so. On two other occasions he had yielded to the solicitations of the brethren that he would consult for his own personal safety. When, shortly after his conversion, the Jews watched the gates of Damascus to kill him, he allowed the disciples to take him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. At the advice of his friends, again, he had consented not to adventure himself into the theatre at Ephesus, at the time of the riot raised by Demetrius. Nor was he a man of stoical insensibility, who could steel himself with great ease against the solicitations of those who loved him. On the contrary, there is every trace in his history and writings of a deeply sympathetic heart, which warmly responded to every exhibition of natural affection ; and on the occasion before us, while he maintains his own course, he shows by his language that he is deeply touched by the solicitude of his friends ; “ What mean ye to weep,” cries he, “ and to break mine heart ? ” Some peculiar reason therefore must have existed in the present case for his persistence in a course, from which he was dissuaded with great show both of argument and

feeling. What was this reason? It will be found, I apprehend, in the statement of the historian as to the origin in Paul's own mind of this visit to Jerusalem; "After these things" "were ended, Paul *purposed in the Spirit*" (i. e., by the direct instigation of the Spirit of God), "when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome." And the obligation, which was thus laid upon him by the Holy Spirit of God, he himself adverts to in his address to the elders at Miletus; "And now, behold, I go *bound in the Spirit* unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." He was not going to Jerusalem without the direct sanction of that Spirit, by which Agabus had spoken. He must, then, act upon his own light. Until the obligation in his own mind was repealed, he must act in pursuance of it. He must not be like the disobedient man of God that came from Judah, who perished by giving heed to a message, which another prophet professed to have received. The Lord had said to Ananias, when commissioning him to the

reclaimed persecutor; "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." When the Holy Ghost testified in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited Paul, the Lord was showing him these things. It did not follow that he was to shrink from them, or to spare himself. There was an obligatory, and not simply a predictive force, in the "must;" "how great things he must suffer" was, in Paul's eyes, "how great things he is by Me appointed and privileged to suffer." He must not, then, listen to friends, when they urged him to a course pleasing to the flesh; he must bear in mind in what spirit his Blessed Master had met the suggestion; "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee," though emanating from the warmest and most true-hearted of friends. And we may well believe that, in the very terms of Agabus's prediction, there was something attractive to the mind of the Apostle. He expresses to the Philippians his burning desire to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and to be made conformable to His death. Now, if he was to be bound at Jerusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, was there not here the closest conformity to the fate of his Master? Was it not

his Master's fate to be bound by the Jews, and led away, and delivered to Pontius Pilate the governor? And shall not the servant, hearing that a similar doom is in store for himself, be emulous of it, knowing that "if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him?" His associates and friends, seeing that his mind was fully made up on the subject, and not doubting that he had decided the matter under the influence of God's Spirit, at length desisted from their solicitations, and acquiesced in the will of the Most High. They had recently been praying that, if it were possible, this cup might pass from their beloved Apostle. Now in the spirit of their Divine Master they added; "nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."

From this explanation of the motives of St. Paul in declining to listen to the advice of his friends, we may gather the important practical lesson, that in matters of duty every man must be guided by the light which his own conscience affords. He must indeed take every appointed method of enlightening that conscience; but he may never defer to the conscience of another, when it prescribes a course at issue with his own convictions. Quite possible it is that larger experience of the Christian life, and

deeper study of Holy Scripture, may alter our point of view on certain subjects of duty, and make that appear a narrow scruple, which once was looked upon as a necessary restriction. But our present measure of light is our present rule of conduct, whatever authority and whatever influence may be on the other side. "To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean;" and no convictions of another person, however enlightened, can remove that relative uncleanness. Paul, being bound in the Spirit, must not be moved from his course by Agabus's warnings. Résolute conscientiousness, while it may consist with prejudice and mistaken views, is the true path in which for us the will of God lies, and in which therefore ultimately real freedom will be found for the human will.

Thus, then, the history of St. Philip the Evangelist merges in that of St. Paul. And thus closes the narrative, upon which we have been for some time past fastening our attention, of the Acts of the Deacons. The Deacons have fared like the Apostles. As scarcely any thing is recorded in Holy Scripture of the Acts of any Apostle, with the exception of St. Peter and St. Paul, so we are left to infer from the two ex-

amples of St. Stephen and St. Philip what the ministry of the other Deacons may have been. If indeed Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, was the founder, as some early writers<sup>4</sup> suppose, of

<sup>4</sup> "Epiphanius, an inaccurate writer, relates (*Adv. Hær.*, i. 2, § 25, p. 76), some details of the life of Nicolas the Deacon, and describes him as gradually sinking into the "grossest impurity, and becoming the originator of the Nicolaitanes, and other immoral sects." (*Smith's Dict. of the Bible*, Art. "Nicolas"). The date of Epiphanius is A.D. 340—402. Though a man of learning, he had no critical habit of mind. Hippolytus also (who lived early in the third century) seems to have taken an unfavourable view of the character of Nicolas. The question of Nicolas's character, and of his connexion with the sect called Nicolaitanes, is well discussed by Mr. Bullock in *Smith's Dictionary*. Archbp. Trench says (*Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches*, p. 78. Parker and Bourn, 1861): "Irenæus (i. xxvi. 3) is probably in error, when he makes the founder of this sect to have been Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, of whom such honourable mention is made in the Acts (vi. 3. 5): and who, if this were true, must have miserably fallen away from the faith." The Archbishop, with Hengstenberg, thinks that the Nicolaitanes of the Revelation were no sect which at that time really existed; but that the word is an enigmatical one, being a Grecized form of "Balaamites;" and that the persons alluded to are certain false teachers in the early Church, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and advocated libertinism on the ground of Christian liberty (pp. 76, 77). Without any other than a second-hand knowledge of the authorities, I am rather disposed (this high authority notwithstanding) to agree with Schaff (*Apostolic Church*, T. T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1854), who thinks that "the testimonies" (to the apostasy of Nicolas the Deacon;

the heretical and immoral sect of the Nicolaitanes, stigmatized by Our Lord in the Book of

and to the foundation by him of an Antinomian Gnostic sect,) "are too clear and too respectable to be lightly set aside, especially if we consider the strong tendency in the primitive Church to venerate as saints, and glorify by legends, all the Christians named in the New Testament. This forbids our adopting the *allegorical* interpretation of the name, which Henstenberg, strangely, and from his position altogether inconsistently, undervaluing these historical testimonies, has given in his work on Balaam (p. 20, *et seq.*), and his commentary on Rev. ii. 6 (vol. i. p. 171, *et seq.*). He considers the name Nicolaus " (in the Revelation) "not a proper name, but a symbolical term, the Greek translation of Balaam,—misleader or corruptor of the people,—from  $\pi\lambda\alpha$  *to devour, to corrupt*, and  $\nu\varsigma$ , *people*. But in the first place, this derivation cannot be even philologically vindicated. For Nicolaus means people-conqueror, which is by no means synonymous with people-misleader. To derive Balaam from  $\pi\lambda\alpha$  and  $\nu\varsigma$ , *lord of the people*, or from the Chaldaic  $\pi\lambda\alpha$  *vicit*, would bring us nearer an identity of terms. But in neither case would the reference have been intelligible to the Greek readers of the Revelation, without further explanation. And in the second place, this interpretation is contradicted by Rev. ii. 14, 15, where the Nicolaitanes are evidently distinguished from the Balaamites, however near akin they may have been in doctrine and practice. When Hengstenberg asserts in support of his explanation, that none but symbolical names occur in the Apocalypse, he is clearly wrong: for not only the name of the author, but also the names of the Jews, ii. 9, and of the seven churches are all to be taken as proper names." (Vol. ii. pp. 377, 378.)

The exact force of the passage in Rev. ii. 14, 15, seems to

the Revelation, then we may see another analogy between the college of the Apostles and that of the Deacons, in the fact that among the Seven, as among the Twelve, there was one unfaithful to his great trust. But the connexion of the Deacon Nicolas with the Nicolaitanes is uncertain; and, however the case may stand, the recorded acts of the Deacons are but brief. Much is ignored which we should wish to know; and no answer is given to many questions which deeply interest curiosity. But such is the manner of Holy Scripture. Throughout it is brief, but significant. There is an exhaustless meaning in its rapid sketches. Happy they who, in this view of its construction, study it not cursorily, but profoundly. Such persons will be led on gradually to a deeper faith in its

me to be this: In the former verse Our Lord says to the Church of Pergamos; "Thou hast in Pergamos certain people "who hold the doctrine of Balaam" (i.e., a doctrine similar to that, by which Balaam of old depraved the Jews). The latter verse, however, is worded as if the former had run thus:—"The *Old Testament Church* had those who inculcated the doctrine of Balaam." "So *thou* also" (the *also* clearly qualifies the *thou*, not the *them*), "hast persons who "hold the" (corresponding) "doctrine of the Nicolaitanes." This would represent the Balaamites under the Old Covenant as being a sort of type of the Nicolaitanes under the New.

inspiration and divine origin. They will see a wisdom in its silences as well as in its utterances; and curiosity to know what is not recorded will give place to thankfulness for the aliment, which faith and hope derive from that which is.

THE END.

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